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THE

VICTIMS OF SOCIETY

BY

THE COUNTESS OF BLESSINGTON.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

"'Tis you that say it, not I; you do the deeds,
And your ungodly deeds find me the words."

LONDON

SAUNDERS AND OTLEY CONDUIT STREET.

M.DCCC.XXXVII.

PREFACE.

THE design of personal satire is sometimes justly, more often erroneously, attributed to those who attempt to paint the manners of the day; and, through the character of a fiction, to delineate the vices or the follies of real life. But as one who refuses the shelter of the anonymous is usually supposed to reject its privileges, so the Author of these volumes ventures to hope that, by pre-

fixing her name to her Work, she offers, at least, a guarantee of her desire neither to excite the fear, nor to wound the vanity, of individuals.

They who move in a highly artificial state of society, acquire, however, a kind of family resemblance; and every general description is susceptible of personal application: while, on the other hand, it is a common disposition among readers to reverse the destiny of Peter Schlemil, and hunt after a substance to every bodiless and visionary shadow:— For, whether it be from curiosity or affection, it is certainly true that we are apt to take up a novel as we go to an exhibition, less to criticise the creations

of fancy, than to search for the portraits of our friends.

It is not then a superfluous precaution seriously to declare, that the Characters of this Work are invented, not copied, as the representatives of a class, or the agents of a moral; and the greater the number of persons (whether those who sully, or those who adorn society), that each sketch may be thought to resemble, the more, perhaps, the Author will have obtained the object of her Work, and proved the assertion of her Preface.

THE

VICTIMS OF SOCIETY.

LADY AUGUSTA VERNON TO LADY MARY HOWARD.

Vernon Hall, June.

I AM sixteen to-day, dearest Mary, and feel so happy and joyous, that I must make you a partaker of my felicity. Would that you were here! for, *hélas!* it will be three long days ere this can reach you; and who knows if, at the expiration of that period, brief as it is, I shall be still as contented? And yet, why not? Have I not all that should insure happiness? A dear, kind, indulgent father,

who spoils, and a mild, sweet mother, who corrects me only with a sigh, or a look of more than usual solicitude. I am, as you have often told me, a strange wayward creature — giddy as a school-boy when he first escapes to his play-ground; and yet, with gleams of melancholy presentiment, as if I felt that there is that within me which may preclude lasting peace.

The truth is, my father and mother are too partial to my good qualities (if, indeed, I possess any), and too blind, or too tolerating, to my faults. Should I ever meet with less lenient judges, how miserable I shall be, and how *unamiable* may I become! for, I am too unused to censure to be capable of patiently enduring it. And yet, how can I hope to find the same absorbing affection, the same forbearing kindness, that I have experienced from my infancy? But, no; I will not allow any

forebodings of the future to cast a gloom over the delightful present. Am I not uncertain as an April morning? I began, all sunshine, with telling you of my happiness; and here am I, clouded over by doubts of its continuance. Thus, it is with me ever — smiles or tears; and both equally beyond my control.

Are you not dying with curiosity to learn the cause of the happiness announced in the second line of this letter? You, who are two years my senior, and ten years wiser, if wisdom may be rated by years, will smile, when I confess, that much of this elation was caused by my dear mother's presenting me with her beautiful *parure* of pearls; and my kind father's giving me a hundred pounds, in the prettiest new pocket-book that ever was seen. Yet, before you condemn me for being delighted by "barbaric pearls," or "sordid gold," let me tell you, that the

words which accompanied the gifts caused the happiness, more than the gifts themselves; though I am not insensible to their charms. "Augusta, my precious child!" said my mother, in that mild and earnest way, so peculiar to her; "here, is your birth-day present: may you ever continue as pure and spotless as the pearls which I now bestow on you."

I threw myself into her arms, and wept on her bosom, for my heart was too full to speak; and I felt, at the moment, that I would rather have died there, than have caused her to shed a tear. She led me to my father's study, who, embracing me, put the pretty pocket-book I told you of into my hand, saying, "Take this, my own Gusty, and when its contents are expended, bring it back to me, and they shall be replaced. You are my darling, my only child — my comfort!" Then, as I clasped his neck, and pressed his

dear face, I felt his tears moisten my cheek. With such parents, have I not cause to be contented? Yes, I am; and will be, dearest Mary, your *happy*, as well as affectionate friend, AUGUSTA VERNON.

LADY MARY HOWARD TO LADY AUGUSTA VERNON.

Howard Castle, June.

DEAREST AUGUSTA,—Were I inclined to play the Mentor, I should lecture you on the proneness to give way to first impulses, which I have always remarked in you; and which is so evident all through your last letter. You say that "you have a melancholy presentiment of having that within you, which may preclude lasting happiness." Does this not look like acknowledging, that you have

faults which may conquer you, instead of your conquering them; and who, with such a belief, could hope for happiness? Happiness is a rare plant, that seldom takes root on earth: few ever enjoyed it, except for a brief period; the search after it is rarely rewarded by the discovery. But, there is an admirable substitute for it, which all may hope to attain, as its attainment depends wholly on self — and that is, a contented spirit. This panacea for the ills of life can never belong to those who are governed *by*, instead of governing their feelings. Feelings are delightful acquaintances; and, like acquaintances, they are charming during prosperity; but, *principles* are our *true friends*, rescuing us from danger, and consoling us in affliction. Cultivate *principles*, then, dearest Augusta, and learn to make *feelings* as subservient to them as good servants should be to their

masters, knowing that wisdom and justice guide them. A ship on the trackless main, without a rudder or compass, is not in a more fearful state than a young and lovely woman without fixed principles, abandoned to the sole government of her feelings.

And now, let me tell you, that this will, probably, be the last lecture you will receive from Mary *Howard*. But do not, therefore, think you are to escape future admonitions. No, dearest Augusta; Mary Delaward, in her matron character, will continue to give her giddy, but dearly loved friend, as many lectures (when required) as sober-minded Mary Howard ever has done.

All is finally fixed for my marriage: the probation, to which Lord Delaward at first submitted with so bad a grace, is expired; and I now may become a wife, with that indispensable, and *only* surety for domestic

peace, — a perfect reliance on the principles of a husband. That I preferred him to all others, you have known; and you know, also, that, when after his return from Italy he sought my hand, I had no means of judging of his tastes or pursuits, except by waiting a year, and seeing or hearing how he occupied his time. He has passed triumphantly through the dangerous ordeal of a season in London, and an autumn and winter in the society of his friends, at their residences, and at Delaward Park. He has neither frequented Crockford's, nor attended every meeting at Newmarket; nor hunted at Melton; nor formed intimacies with dissolute men; nor flirted with any of the women who are more remarkable for attracting admiration than for repelling admirers. In short, he is not a young man of fashion; or, rather, a fashionable man; and therefore, I am not

afraid that he will find clubs more agreeable than home, or any other man's wife more to his taste, than his own.

My father has written to yours, to request that he, and your good mother, will conduct your giddy self to Howard Castle, to be present at the nuptial ceremony. This will be a good occasion for you to display your pearls, on the possession of which I congratulate you: and to gratify, by your presence, your fondly attached MARY HOWARD.

LADY A. VERNON TO MISS MONTRESSOR.

Howard Castle.

HERE we are, my dear Caroline, safely arrived; and, according to promise, I give you an account of all that is going on in this place. Dear Mary Howard is as amiable, as hand-

some, and as *reasonable*, as ever; and seems to me unaccountably tranquil, for one who is on the point of marrying the man of her choice. I should be all in a flutter on such an occasion, not knowing whether to laugh or cry, and doing both by turns. Lord Delaward is very good-looking, but has a sort of dignified gravity about him that is rather chilling and imposing; at least, such is its effect on me. There is a respectful deference in his manner towards Mary, that checks even my habitual familiarity: it is as though he wished to intimate, that *she* whom *he* had chosen was not to be lightly approached; consequently, I find myself involuntarily assuming a more reverential demeanour towards her—not that I am less attached to her than before. I wonder, Caroline, whether *I* shall ever excite this respectful feeling in the breast of any man. There is something very flatter-

ing in it, too; yet, I should like to be more wildly, more passionately loved than Mary is: and I should be addicted to *shewing* my power over my lover, as well as exerting it. How delightful to alarm, to agitate him—to make him feel as if he could never be sure of me! instead of being, as Lord Delaward appears to be, as certain of Mary's unchangeable affection as he is of his own.

I write all that comes into my giddy head to you, because I know you to be as giddy as myself. I dared not have addressed half this idle trifling to Mary Howard, who views, in her future husband, the companion with whom she is to share those trials of life from which even the most fortunate are not exempt; while I should think only of the lover, with whom I was to enjoy its pleasures. Mary's is the just view, mine the too common one

Lord Delaward presented a superb suit of

diamonds to Mary this morning; they were in a case lined with blue velvet, and really shone like stars in the azure sky. They did not at all dazzle her, though, I confess, they did me. She seemed to value them only as being *his* gift, and in consequence of their having never been worn save by virtuous women; for his mother and grandmother were remarkable for their decorous lives; but *I*, if the truth must be told, should have valued them for their own intrinsic beauty, and not have given a thought to their former owners. I often wish that I could be as good and as rational as Mary Howard; and she sometimes makes me good, if not wise, by the influence she possesses over me. *Mais, hélas!* it does not last long; for a few flattering speeches, a new dress, or a trinket, excite me to fresh levities, and all my praiseworthy resolutions fade away. I must leave off, as I am summoned to the

drawing-room; and shall resume my pen to-morrow, after the wedding.

I never fancied that I should weep at a wedding; yet, I have done so; and so, I think, would even you, had you been present, little as you are given to the indulgence of tears. There is something solemn in witnessing the ratification of a union that death alone can dissolve, when the individuals forming it are fully penetrated with the importance, the holiness of the duties they are undertaking. Mary (no longer Mary *Howard*) preferred being married in the parish church to having the ceremony performed at home: I ventured to ask her the reason yesterday, when we were alone; and she told me, that, having been baptised, confirmed, and having received

the sacrament in that church, she wished to pledge her faith at the same altar.

"My mother, too, sleeps there," added Mary, with a tear trembling in her eye; "and this is a strong inducement to me: it is as though it sanctified still more solemnly my marriage."

A pensiveness pervaded the whole party last evening. Lord Howard was evidently thinking of his approaching separation from his child, while she was continually stealing looks at him, as if to imprint his features in her memory; though, at each glance, her eyes became suffused with tears. Lord Delaward made Lord Howard promise to join them in a fortnight; and pressed it so strongly, that it was easy to see that he considered this the best mode of consoling Mary.

My dear good papa and mamma seemed

to think that it was *I* that was going to be married; for they looked at me as often and as tenderly as if I was to be whisked off from them to-morrow in a travelling-carriage and four; and I began to fear, that they would make up their minds to take measures for my leading a life of single blessedness, now that all the pain of parting with a child was "brought home to their business and their bosoms" by witnessing Lord Howard's chagrin.

The old servants (and nearly all of them are old) seemed to partake the general depression of spirits; and I continually caught them regarding their young mistress with reverential affection. I know that you will expect a description of the bride's dress, but I am thinking too much of *her*, to enter into a detail of her toilette. It was all that was proper for such an occasion; but, her pale

cheek, trembling lip, and tearful eyes, prevented even my giddy self from attending to aught else. The children of the school that Mary founded here, all attended at the church, headed by their mistress, and in their Sunday clothes, each carrying a bouquet. The clergyman who performed the ceremony is the same who baptised Mary; and he read the service most impressively. She repeated the words in a clear and firm voice, as if she wished all present to hear her; and when Lord Delaward placed the ring on her finger, she looked at the monument of her mother, as if to beseech the blessing of her whose remains are reposing beneath it. Tears were continually stealing down the cheeks of Lord Howard; his thoughts appeared to be divided between the wife he had lost, and the child he was then resigning.

When we left the church, the children presented their bouquets to Lady Delaward, and our carriages were nearly filled with flowers, as, followed by the blessings of the poor, who all assembled to see their benefactress, we returned to Howard Castle.

The *déjeúner*, though a very splendid one, was little honoured by the appetites of the guests. The father and daughter were too much affected to admit of any thing like cheerfulness in those around them. When the repast had terminated, and Lord Delaward's carriage was announced, Mary affectionately reminded my father and mother of their promise to remain at Howard Castle, until the day her father is to set out to join her at Delaward Park, where we are also invited.

The parting between Lord Howard and Mary was truly affecting, and the more so

that it was evident each had endeavoured, for the sake of the other, to suppress all manifestation of emotion. When the carriage of the bridegroom drove away, Lord Howard entered his study, followed by my father and mother, who shared his grief, if they could not remove it; and they are all three, at this moment, talking over the happy prospects of the new-married couple. The tenantry and the poor have been plentifully regaled in the park; so that, while within the castle *all* has been melancholy, the greatest hilarity prevails without.

I have now written you an epistle as large as the *Times* newspaper with a supplementary sheet, for which you ought to be very thankful, as I heve not been in an epistolary mood. I must be present at the marriage of some madcap like yourself, to remove the impression produced on me by that which I have

just witnessed; and to bring me back to the comfortable belief, which you have tried to inculcate, that it is only a ceremony established to give ladies the power of obtaining homes and wardrobes, diamonds, and new carriages, and various other delightful things, too numerous to name: and all this good only taxed with the appendage of a — husband. Your affectionate friend,

AUGUSTA VERNON.

MISS MONTRESSOR TO THE LADY A. VERNON.

Do you know, *ma chère*, that you are growing quite romantic and sentimental. Your whole description of the marriage of your sober-minded friend was worthy of some lachrymose novel, and not at all like your usual *léger* style; which I am candid enough to acknowledge that I prefer. Lord Dela-

ward seems to be a sort of modern copy of Sir Charles Grandison; and presents himself to my imagination in a court-dress, with a *chapeau-bras*. I am sure that he and his bride will be models of domestic felicity, doing all the good in their power, and avoiding all the evil; superintending their household, establishing charity-schools, setting the best examples, and, content to "live in decencies for ever," arrive at a good old age, the slaves to what they call their principles; but, which, in dear France, where my happiest days have been past, we designate by another and a better name — prejudices.

I almost begin to despair of making any thing of you, *chère Augusta,* while you are so easily influenced by those around you. You resemble the chameleon, which is said to take the colours of whatever it is brought in contact with. This must not be. Influence

others *tant que vous voudrez;* but, if you wish to maintain your independence, permit not others to influence you.

What could be more absurd than the maudlin sentimentality of Lord Howard at his daughter's marrying well — an object which, I dare say, it has been his constant aim to accomplish ever since she passed her third lustre? Then, Lady Mary finds it a very melancholy thing, forsooth, to marry the man of her choice, with a high station, large fortune, and all appliances to boot; because, it takes her from her dull old paternal castle, her stupid papa, and her — charity-school! Do not be very much offended with me, *ma chère petite*, when I confess that I laughed heartily at your sentimental description of all this absurd drivelling. You talk of the solemnity of the ratification of a union which *death* alone can dissolve, quite for-

getting how often the House of Lords performs this service; as a reference to "Debrett's Peerage" can certify. Had you reflected on the possibility of this less *solemn* dissolution of Hymen's chains, a possibility which is always taken into consideration by the lawyers employed by the contracting parties, if not by the contracting parties themselves, you would have felt less melancholy on the occasion. Indeed, your lachrymose sympathies appeared to me quite incomprehensible; and I expected to have Lady Mary's tears ultimately accounted for by the discovery of some interesting young swain in the neighbourhood, the son of the parson or doctor, who had ventured to regard her beauties, as dogs bay the moon. I could fill up a very pretty little vaudeville from such a subject; whereas, of the reality, as you viewed it, one could make nothing. We live in an age, *ma bonne Augusta*, when

none but exciting subjects have any interest. Tears are now only shed when great crimes are their source; domestic feelings are *passés de mode;* and those who would awaken sympathy, must dare guilt. Look at the theatres in France — where horror on horror accumulates, and plaudits "loud and deep" follow every scene of guilt, and every sentiment of reckless daring! Look at the crimes every day committed in that land of passion, where naught sleeps save—reason; and where events, public and private, succeed each other so quickly, that the mind is kept in a continual and delightful state of excitement. Had your friend, Lady Mary, and her sapient *père,* been inhabitants of dear France, they would have found neither time nor scene for their domestic sentimentalities. She would have been thinking of her *trousseau*, and the envy it would excite — or the last novel of Eugene, Sue, or

Balzac, or of all these; for in France a woman's head can embrace simultaneously many more subjects than ours can contain in succession, during the lapse of a twelvemonth. And hence their general freedom from concentrated or violent affections; a freedom that renders them *toujours gai, et toujours aimable,* — they dispensing to the *many,* the smiles and *petits soins* that we reserve for the *few.* But to return to you, *ma chère.* Let me beseech you to abandon *l'école sentimentale, c'est mauvais genre à present:* let me, also, remind you to be careful of not allowing my letters to be seen by any eye save your own. I write to you *à cœur ouvert;* and should detest having my hasty and inartificial compositions subjected to the perusal and criticism of some one who might not be able to understand them, or

votre amie, CAROLINE.

THE COUNTESS OF DELAWARD TO THE LADY AUGUSTA VERNON.

Delaward Park.

I AM impatient to hear from you, dearest Augusta, how my beloved father supports this, our first separation. He has written to me in a cheerful tone; but he is so prone to conceal his own sufferings, in order not to increase those of others, that I fear his cheerfulness was only assumed to tranquillise me. I have been so accustomed to refer to him on all occasions, to administer to his happiness, and to derive mine from him, that, even surrounded with blessings as I am, I want his presence, to be as contented and as grateful as I ought to be. How thankful should we be to the Almighty, when He gives us parents whom we can love and reverence, as well as obey—when affection and duty go

hand in hand! This has been my blessed lot, and is likewise yours, my dear Augusta. There is, however, one difference between our parents, though it proceeds from the same cause, acting diversely,—namely, excessive affection. Mine never permitted me to have a secret from them, or to receive a letter from any of my companions that was not submitted to their inspection. This plan was adopted when I was so young, that I could not understand its motive; and, when I grew older, the habit was so formed, that I knew not whether it was continued by their desire or my own. They reasoned with me on the fallacies often contained in the letters of my young friends, and on the inferences which my inexperience led me to draw from them. They taught me to reflect, and to distinguish between what was erroneous and what was praiseworthy in sentiment; and to judge of actions by principle

alone, and not by prejudices. From how many false impressions did my beloved parents rescue me, by exerting for me their reason, ere my own had acquired sufficient force to protect me! Yours, with equal affection, impose no restraint on your intercourse with your female friends. They never see your correspondence; consequently, cannot refute the false opinions it may contain, and, for the detection of which, your youth and inexperience unfit you. You are, therefore, exposed to the danger of imbibing the sentiments of those who are less amiable and pure-minded than yourself; ere yet your principles are immutably fixed, or your reasoning powers sufficiently matured to enable you to reject the poison that may be thus proffered. You know, dear Augusta, that I am not malignant or censorious: and, therefore, will not suspect me of being influenced by unworthy feelings,

when I tell you I am apprehensive that the purity of your mind may be sullied, and the goodness of your heart impaired, by your correspondence with Miss Montressor. When you mentioned, in the presence of Lord Delaward, that you frequently heard from her, did you not observe that he looked unusually grave? Knowing the sincerity of my affection for you, he has thought it his duty to inform me, that, from all he saw and heard of that young lady, in Italy, and in France, he considers an intimacy with her fraught with danger for one so young as yourself.

Miss Montressor prides herself on having conquered what she calls English prejudices, and adopted French opinions in their place. The most sacred objects and established usages, — nay, the domestic affections, — are made the subjects of her *persiflage;* and she is too anxious to pass for a *bel esprit* in society, to

guard against being more than suspected of levity, irreligion, and heartlessness.

Break off your correspondence with her by degrees, or, if you have mental courage sufficient to *brusquer* it, do so; and call to mind the opinion of Lord Delaward expressed within a few minutes before I commenced this letter, — an opinion which I have often heard my dear father repeat, — that there is more danger to a young and innocent female in an unrestrained correspondence with one of her own sex who is unprincipled and heartless, than in an acquaintance even with men of light character, who possess not equal opportunities of instilling the poison of their false opinions.

I tell you nothing of my happiness, my dear Augusta, but I hope you will soon witness it. It is the general custom for brides to write inflated descriptions of their felicity to their friends: look for none of these from me:

and be assured that happiness, like beauty, can never be faithfully expressed by a picture, and perhaps the less easy it is to describe the more perfect it is.

Your affectionate

MARY DELAWARD.

THE LADY A. VERNON TO MISS MONTRESSOR.

I CANNOT believe, dear Caroline, that you are really serious in half that you write to me; may I add, that I do not wish to think that you are? Indeed, you do not understand Lady Delaward's character; if you did, you would not imagine her to be a person affecting sentimentality herself, or encouraging its display in others. If you value my friendship, do not attempt to ridicule those I love and respect;

for, though I give you full permission to laugh at me, I am peculiarly sensitive with regard to them.

The unbecoming levity with which you refer to the frequency and facility of divorce, both shocked and pained me. How could you jest on so grave a matter, or remind me of examples of conduct in our sex so humiliating to reflect on? It is this proneness to treat with ridicule subjects which should be ever exempt from its assaults, that often and seriously offends your good aunt, and alarms those whose good opinion I so much wish you to obtain. Conquer this unfeminine propensity, dear Caroline; for, be assured, its indulgence is highly injurious to you.

We dined yesterday at Lord Seymour's, where we met two London beaux; one, Lord Annandale, and the other, Sir Henry Beaumont. The first is good-looking, and has the appear-

ance of being extremely well satisfied with himself, perhaps too much so: and yet, I like to see men of fashion possess a certain confidence of manner; it renders their attentions more flattering. Besides, he who greatly admires himself, must find many charms in that woman with whom he is disposed to share his hitherto self-engrossed admiration. Sir Henry Beaumont is not so good-looking as Lord Annandale; he has lank hair, which I detest; while Lord Annandale's floats in hyacinthine curls, and sets off his face to the greatest advantage.

The Ladies Seymour evidently wished to attract Lord Annandale, and he as evidently was so unmindful of their fascinations as to bestow a large share of his attention on me; which, to judge from their looks, was any thing but agreeable to them. They were forced to be content with the assiduities of Sir Henry Beaumont, who seemed almost

afraid to look at me, when he observed that I had monopolised the entire attention of Lord Annandale. What a difference is there in the appearance and manner of Lord Annandale, and Lord Delaward! In the presence of the latter, I experienced a degree of restraint which almost amounted to *gêne;* while in that of the former I feel as perfectly at my ease as if we were old acquaintances. And yet I should like to have a husband whose dignity repelled familiarity from all but me: not such a one as that ceremonious lord of whom we read, who, when his young wife embraced him, told her that his former countess, though a Howard, *never* took such a liberty.

Our host has invited Lord Annandale to spend two or three days here; an invitation which he accepted with evident pleasure, and not without insinuating to me that I

was the magnet which attracted him to Howard Castle. I am not sorry to have this place enlivened by the presence of a beau; for, to confess the truth, the sententious conversation of Lord Howard, and the admiring assents of papa and mamma, are more instructive than amusing. I wish you were here—a selfish wish, you will say—as I have mentioned the *tristesse* of this *séjour;* but, I believe we are always most disposed to desire the presence of our friends, when we most require the exhilaration it inspires.

Your affectionate

AUGUSTA VERNON.

LORD ANNANDALE TO THE MARQUESS OF NOTTINGHAM.

My dear Nottingham, — Here, I am in the feudal chateau of the Howards! the last place where I expected to find myself; and to which I have been attracted by the beautiful daughter of Lord Vernon, who, with her father and mother, are staying here on a visit. I met them at Lord Seymour's, when at dinner, two days ago, and Lord Howard asked me to come and pass a short time with him; an invitation I should assuredly not have accepted, had not the bright eyes of the fair Lady Augusta appeared to sparkle with complacency when it was made. You can fancy nothing half so brilliant, so beautiful, and so joyous, as this same Lady Augusta. She resembles nothing earthly that I have seen, or unearthly that I have imagined, except it be the *beau-idéal* of a

Hebe. The most luxuriant tresses, of the fairest and most silken texture, eyes blue and radiant as the heavens, cheeks of rose, and lips of carnation, and a skin white and polished as—what shall I say? not marble, for that is hard—not snow, for that is cold—not satin, for that sounds like a man-milliner comparison—like nothing, that I ever saw before, or, I verily believe, shall see again, except in her. Then, her figure! by Jove, it is matchless! All the elasticity and bounding animation of the child, with all the rounded beauty of contour of the woman. Arms that might serve as models to the sculptor; hands that look as if only formed to play with flowers; and feet that seem almost too small to bear the beautiful figure, in which she excels all other women. No, my dear Nottingham, even after this description, you can no more form an idea of Lady Augusta Vernon, than I could

have believed that such transcendent loveliness existed, until I had seen her. She is a perfect child in manner and in mind, and a little of a spoilt one too, I should imagine, from a certain half pouting, half laughing look, with which I saw her resist some interference of her father, relative to a horse that he thought too spirited for her to ride. You should have seen the *air mutin* with which she maintained that she could perfectly master it; and yet, it was the arch vivacity of a playful child, and not the wilfulness of an obstinate woman, that she displayed in this little contest with papa. If ever again I should put on the chains of the saffron-robed god, this is just the creature to tempt me; and I should be the envy of all the men in London, could I present her there as Lady Annandale, before the roses of her cheeks have faded, or the brilliancy of her eyes been dimmed, by a London

season, which is so destructive to the freshness of beauty. Envy me for being under the same roof with this divinity; I know you would, if you could see her!

Tout à vous,

ANNANDALE.

LADY AUGUSTA VERNON TO LADY DELAWARD.

DEAREST MARY, — Though we shall meet in a few days, I know you wish to be kept *au courant* of the state of health and spirits of your dear father. He is well, and as cheerful as can be expected, during the first week of separation from an only child — and such a child! Until I saw the effect your absence has produced, I was not aware how much of the happiness of a parent is rent from him,

when, by the departure of his child from the paternal home, he is left to look at the vacant chair, the silent harp, and the untouched piano. How gloomy, then, appears the dwelling where no daughter's greeting meets him in the morning, and no fond good-night awaits him ere he seeks his pillow! This is all doubly experienced, when a mother shares not the solitude of a father thus bereaved; and I have endeavoured all in my power, although, I fear, inefficaciously, to supply your place to Lord Howard. I feel as if my affection for my own parents had increased, since I have witnessed how dear and essential a daughter is, to the happiness of the authors of her being.

We have had a visitor here for the last two days — Lord Annandale. He is agreeable and good-looking, and, in every respect, far superior to the men I have been accustomed to see. I can hardly believe that he has been a

husband, and is a father; for, he appears almost as lively and unthinking as myself: and I have ever associated in my mind a pensiveness, if not a gravity, with my ideas of those who have filled those serious and responsible capacities. Lord Annandale has been giving me such glowing descriptions of London, and its pleasures, that I pine to be there, and to partake them. I wish I was seventeen, for, at that age I am to be presented; *mais, hélas!* it wants eleven long months to that period. Lord Annandale treats me quite as if I had been *out*, and has told me a good deal of the London gossip: he has been a little ill-natured in laughing at the Ladies Seymour, in which I fear that I too readily joined; but there was no resisting the drollery of his mimickry. He says, that they are as ambitious of conquests as ever Napoleon was, though not so successful; and, that, unlike

him, they keep no *corps de réserve*, as they bring all their forces into the field, at once. Lord Annandale is just the sort of person that Caroline Montressor would like. *A propos* of her: I cannot, dear Mary, give her up, it would look so unkind and ill-natured. Indeed, you do not render her justice; for, though I must admit she is given to *persiflage*, she is kind-hearted, and well-meaning, and very much attached to me. You talk so quietly of your happiness, that, though I cannot doubt, I do not feel disposed to envy it. But, you will scold me if I say more, and prove to me, as you always do, that *you* are right, and *I* wrong, though always your affectionate

AUGUSTA VERNON.

LADY DELAWARD TO LADY AUGUSTA VERNON.

Delaward Park.

Can it be possible, that you, my dear Augusta, can join in the laughter of Lord Annandale against the Ladies Seymour? His ridiculing them to you, betrays that he had discovered in you a propensity to be pleased by his ill-natured raillery — a poor compliment to your heart. I know Lord Annandale, and think him vain, affected, and flippant: but, let me not, while censuring his malevolent propensity, merit a similar imputation, by commenting too severely on his faults. I would only impress upon your mind, that a man who indulges in satirical gossip is always a dangerous, although he may be an amusing companion. Nothing implies a light estimation of our sex more than the habit some men have of seeking to entertain us at the expense of our

female acquaintances; and, when we encourage their malice by our smiles, we justify their bad opinion. You say, that Lord Annandale's glowing description of London, and its pleasures, makes you wish to be there, and to partake them; and that you sigh for the completion of your seventeenth year, that you may enter into fashionable life. If I know your heart, I pronounce that disappointment must await you in that glittering circle where you anticipate only happiness; and where *pleasure*, though at a distance it may look like the unearthly guest, loses all resemblance when nearer approached.

If you are determined to persist in your correspondence with Miss Montressor, do, at least, make up your mind to reject her counsel, and shun the adoption of her false opinions. I dwell not on the evil consequences which an intimacy with her may produce, by alarming the good and prudent from seeking you. Her levity and

indiscretion in avowing her principles — or want of principles, I should rather say — have driven from her many of her own sex, and impressed the other, with notions most prejudicial to a young woman. Serious as this consideration may be, I am more alarmed by the certain risk which your morals incur in an intimacy with her, than by the probable injury which it may entail upon your worldly prospects. Be on your guard, dearest Augusta; read none of the French novels she recommends; and, if you will not break with her, at least discourage her levity as much as you can. We expect you to dinner on Thursday: need I say how glad I shall be to see you again?

Your affectionate

MARY DELAWARD.

LADY A. VERNON TO MISS MONTRESSOR.

Lord Annandale is still here, dearest Caroline; and, were we not going to Delaward Park to-morrow, would probably continue here as long as we may do, or at least as long as his convenience permitted. Shall I, or shall I not confess, that he has declared himself my suitor, and that I, though somewhat loath, have listened to his prayer, and referred him to papa; who, however, and mamma, seemed more surprised than pleased at the avowal of his attachment to me. They pleaded, in opposition to the demand, my extreme youth and inexperience — my ignorance of the world — and their desire that I should not marry until I was at least eighteen. All their reasoning only served to increase the ardour of my suitor; who implored me with such zeal and

passion, that I consented to tell my mother that *my* happiness depended on my union with him.

She, dear good soul, — having shed a few tears at the declaration, that the happiness of her Augusta depended on any one save her, and papa, and having expressed some wonder that, on so short an acquaintance, a serious attachment *could* be formed, and some doubts that I could be happy away from parents who adored me, — sought papa, to tell him what I desired he should know. No sooner had she left the room, than I wished to recall her. Her last observation had touched a chord in my heart that vibrated painfully; and I asked myself, while tears streamed down my cheeks, whether, indeed, I could be happy, away from the dear, the indulgent parents, whom I was willing to abandon for a man unknown to me a few weeks ago? I felt tempted to follow her

to my father's room, and to adopt their rejection of Lord Annandale, or, at least, to retard my acceptance of him for a year or two: but shame, and a dread of the imputation of giddiness and vacillation, to which so rapid a change in my feelings might have given rise, checked the impulse; and I remained weeping in my room, frightened at the dilemma into which my own weakness had reduced me, and awaiting with dread, the result of that intercession on the part of mamma, for which, only a few minutes before, I had warmly pleaded.

How strange is the human heart! or, at least, that specimen of it which is now throbbing in my breast. While listening to Lord Annandale's passionate entreaties to be his, I fancied that he was dear to me—nay, almost believed my own assertion, that my happiness depended on a union with him; yet, now that my parents have yielded to

his solicitation, supposing that this concession was necessary to the peace of their child, I feel as if he had become indifferent to me, and I wonder how I could ever have imagined that I loved him.

When subsequently he came to me, all rapture at the consent of my father, and thanked me for having obtained it, I experienced an instinctive desire to tell him the state of my feelings: but shame again withheld me, joined to a latent doubt of the possibility of another change in my sentiments; consequently, I let him pour out his impassioned vows of eternal affection and gratitude, while I coldly suffered, instead of participating his happiness. Surely I do not, cannot, love this man, or I could not feel thus coldly on such an occasion: yet, he is handsome and agreeable, and, a few hours ago, I thought him much more than this. Counsel me, dearest Caroline; tell me if there

is yet time to avow to my parents the real state of my inclinations, and to be equally candid with Lord Annandale. It seems to me to be cruel to let him continue in the erroneous belief that I love him, when the illusion has vanished from my own mind; and yet how miserable will such an avowal render him, adoring me as he does!

No, I have not courage to inflict unhappiness on another: let me rather bear it myself, since to my own levity, and want of self-knowledge, it is due. I am now sensible that I have been dazzled and flattered by this, the first passion I have inspired; and that I have mistaken the transient gratitude occasioned by gratified vanity, for a more fervent sentiment. Lord Annandale has told me, that he fears Lady Delaward may prejudice me against him; and that this apprehension was one of the reasons which urged him to press his suit before I had

again seen her. He attempted to pass some ill-natured pleasantries on her prudery, and old-fashioned formality of manners; said that she disliked every one who was not as straight-laced as herself: but I checked his raillery, as I cannot bear to hear Lady Delaward spoken ill of by those who judge her only from a cold exterior. To-morrow, we set out to Delaward Park, and Lord Annandale goes to his seat in Gloucestershire. I feel a sense of relief at our separation; for, he is so overjoyed and happy, that my calmness, if not gravity, forms a contrast not pleasant to me, and not, I should think, likely to be gratifying to him. If all women leave their accepted lovers with as little regret as I have experienced in separating from mine, why, then, I envy neither the lover, nor the loved.

Your affectionate

AUGUSTA VERNON.

LORD ANNANDALE TO THE MARQUESS OF NOTTINGHAM.

CONGRATULATE me, my dear Nottingham, for I am the happiest dog alive this day. You will be ready to exclaim, with the Lord C., on a similar occasion, some fifty years ago, "Every dog has his day;" but I will forgive you the assertion, for I am too happy, too proud, to cavil with any thing at present.

"Well, well," I fancy I hear you ask, "what does all this joy mean? Is there a change of ministry, and is he premier? or has his horse won at Newmarket? Has his worst enemy lost half his fortune at Crockford's, and has *he* gained it? or, has he got the twenty-thousand prize in the lottery?"

No, *mon cher!* none of these auspicious events have occurred; but I have drawn a prize in the lottery of wedlock, that has ren-

dered me more happy than if each and all of them had happened. I have proposed for, and been accepted by, the most beautiful and fascinating of her sex, who has just enough of the angel in her composition to elevate her above all other women; and just enough of the woman to make a lover go mad, if she chose to take it into her head to torment him. Papa and mamma are the most primitively good persons on earth, knowing little of our world, and scarcely dreaming that vice or wickedness exists. They idolise their daughter, as well they may, and were unwilling to consent to her marrying for two years to come. But, I won on Lady Augusta's pity, by displaying the love I *felt*, and the despair I did *not* feel: for, *entre nous*, I was sure of talking her over to take my side of the question, by giving her a few insinuations that papa and mamma were treating her as a child. This

suggestion, aided by my vehement protestations of affection and grief, soon settled the affair; and induced her to tell mamma that *her* happiness depended upon our union. You know that I had determined on never again entering the pale of matrimony; a resolution that I should have faithfully kept, had I only seen the belles of Almack's galloping, waltzing, or quadrilling, for — husbands; or cantering in the Park, to catch some Nimrod. No; your London beauty, with pale cheeks, languid eyes, and uncountable accomplishments, would not have made me captive: but, this creature — as fresh in mind as in person, full of health, of hope, and joy — there *was* no resisting. I shall be disappointed if she do not produce an amazing sensation in the fashionable world. Her beauty is so brilliant, that it must command universal homage; and her *naïveté* has nothing rustic in

it. She has been so much accustomed to be admired, nay, worshipped, by those around her, that she is more likely to receive the general admiration of our circle as her right, than as a subject for gratitude. And yet, there is nothing insolent in her pretensions: a consciousness of beauty and power may well be pardoned in a creature fair enough to warm the frozen heart of a Stoic, and lively enough to keep that heart in perpetual agitation.

To-morrow, *ma belle fiancée,* and her papa and mamma, leave this place, with Lord Howard, for Delaward Park. I know I am no favourite with the Delawards, who are very formal, stuck-up people; and who, were I not an *accepted* lover, might be very likely to influence Lady Augusta, over whom Lady Delaward has long exercised an empire founded on affection. I feared this empire, and en-

deavoured, once or twice, to ridicule Lady Delaward, to my *future*; but, she resented the attempt most warmly, and, therefore, I have ever since avoided the subject.

I return to Gloucestershire to-morrow, and shall be in town in a few days, to put all *en train* with the lawyers, who now-a-days make as many difficulties in letting a man marry, as they formerly did in unmarrying him; consequently, a modern marriage-settlement seems more like an agreement drawn up between two hostile parties, mutually apprehensive of fraud, than of two loving persons going to be made one. The Scotch term of married *against*, instead of *to*, has always struck me as peculiarly felicitous. But here am I *plaisantant* respecting that state into which I am so anxious to enter! perhaps on the principle of anticipating the *mauvaises plaisanteries* of my friends. Adieu,

au revoir, as I conclude you will be in town by the time I arrive there.

Tout à vous,

ANNANDALE.

MISS MONTRESSOR TO LADY A. VERNON.

AND so, *ma chère* Augusta, you have accepted Lord Annandale! This surprises me not, neither does it displease; but, I confess, your sentimental scruples as to not liking him made me laugh, though they vexed me a little too. How much have you to learn, *ma bonne!* You are fortunate in having secured a *bon parti* without passing through the tiresome ceremony of *coming out;* and being exhibited through a whole season, perhaps *two*, to those disposed to take unto themselves

a wife. A demoiselle, however charming, is always placed in a *fausse position* under such circumstances, even in England, where unmarried women have so much more liberty than in other countries; I congratulate you, therefore, on having escaped that ordeal of patience, being "a *belle* of a season," and entering the fashionable world as a married woman, giving the *ton* to, not taking it from, others.

I have never seen a group of our young *débutantes*, at their first presentation at court, without being reminded of the horses, mules, and asses, in Italy, decked in plumes and tinsel, on the *fête* of St. Anthony, and led to be blessed by that patron of animals, preparatory to their exhibition for sale; while those who intend to purchase, flock round to examine their points and paces. You have escaped all this humiliation; and, instead of approaching royalty as a blushing novice, to obtain a

lascia passare for fashionable life, you enter the court, with a matron's tiara of diamonds encircling your brow, and the passport of beauty, rank, and fashion, signed by Hymen's coronet. And with all this, and other "appliances to boot," you hesitate; and think, pretty innocent! that, because you do not love him who is to bestow, you ought to decline them! This is really being romantic *en verité!* Lady Delaward herself, your Minerva, could not betray a more absolute and fantastic delicacy. Lord Annandale is *un homme du monde;* amusing, and willing to be amused; with no inconsiderable portion of vanity, and with a mind that refers all his own actions and those of others to the opinion of that society whose suffrages alone he seeks and values. How he would laugh at your romantic scruples, were you, in the simplicity of your heart, to confide them to him! Be assured, *ma chère,* that

it is by no means necessary that love should be the prelude of matrimony. *Au contraire*, to those who intend, as sensible persons ought, to live in the world and do as others do, this selfish passion would be the greatest hinderance to comfort in a *ménage* conducted on the principles of those formed in fashionable life. Were you "in love," as this calamity is styled, with Lord Annandale, *you* would find the frequent absences imposed by business or pleasure on all men, a constant and irritating source of chagrin; and *he* would find your murmurs, or grave looks, on such occasions, any thing but agreeable. That he should *admire* you greatly is very desirable, because it will ensure your empire over him, without subjecting you to the *ennuyeuses* restrictions, and *exigeances*, which husbands who are in love with their wives impose. The more *he* admires you, the more will he be gratified by the admi-

ration you excite in others: hence, you may count on more liberty, and consequently on more pleasure, than fall to the lot of those women who conjugate the verb to *love* with their husbands; a connubial process which, commencing with, *I* love, *thou* lovest, soon becomes enlivened by *he* loves, and, better still, *they* love; until all terminates in the past tense, we *have* loved. Before, however, this fatal stage of the conjugation arrives, how many unhappy hours, and lowering clouds, must the matrimonial horizon have known! Yours will be exempt from all such; and your happiness will afford pleasure to no one more truly than to your

CAROLINE.

LADY A. VERNON TO MISS MONTRESSOR.

Delaward Park.

It is strange, dearest Caroline, but nevertheless true, that your worldly wisdom is much less congenial to my feelings, than are the pure, and, as you call them, severe principles of Lady Delaward. There is something so heartless, so calculating, in your system, that I turn from it with dislike; and your letter, which was forwarded to me here, has vexed and disappointed me. You should have seen the meeting of Lady Delaward and her father, and the affectionate and respectful attention Lord Delaward pays him, and then you would not, *could* not, depreciate the power of love; for, every courtesy to the parent indicated the warm attachment which the husband bore to the daughter. You should have seen, Caroline, the glances of deep,

but silent tenderness, with which Lady Delaward repays her lord for each and all of these acts of attention; and even *you* must have become sensible of the inestimable value of that sentiment which produces such effects. It is now that Lord Howard is repaid for all the chagrin he felt at his daughter's departure from his roof. In witnessing the happiness of *her* well-ordered home, he ceases to remember that *his* has become lonely; and the deep, the devoted attachment of her husband, manifested in a thousand daily proofs, consoles him for having yielded her to him.

I like Lord Delaward more every hour. There is a kindness and cordiality in his manner towards those he considers his friends, that receives additional value from his stately courtesy to mere acquaintances. It may be only fancy, but I sometimes think that there is something of pity mingled in the

kindness he evinces towards me; Lady Delaward, also, often looks at me with a pensive gaze, as if she augured ill of the engagement I have formed. She asked me whether it was irrevocable, and whether I loved Lord Annandale? I was on the point of throwing myself into her arms, and avowing all my feelings; when the recollection, that my poor mother had told her that it was *I* who had vanquished hers and my father's objections, sealed my lips, until I had acquired sufficient firmness to answer in the affirmative, while my heart rebelled against the falsehood of the assertion. Since then, she has, evidently, been very guarded in communicating to me her opinion of Lord Annandale; and from this conversation I date the inexplicable pity which seems to pervade her and Lord Delaward's feeling towards me. And yet, there are moments when I ask

myself, whether, in thus uniting myself to a man I do not love, I am not rendering myself an object of pity?

Yesterday, we drove through the beautiful park here; and Lady Delaward stopped at a "cottage of *gentility*," which, though *not* displaying a "double coach-house," was, nevertheless, by the neatness, nay, elegance, of its structure, well entitled to that appellation.

"I must introduce you to a very valued friend of my husband's," said she to my mother, as we were marshalled through a light and cheerful little vestibule, by a rural Hebe, in the shape of a handmaiden, to one of the prettiest and most comfortable small libraries it has ever been my good fortune to enter.

"I have brought you my dear friends, Mrs. Ord," said Lady Delaward, presenting us to one of the most ladylike women

imaginable; who, though past the meridian of life, still possessed considerable remains of beauty. By her were seated two lovely girls, of seventeen and eighteen, one drawing, and the other embroidering, whose beaming eyes sparkled with pleasure at seeing Lady Delaward. The ordinary salutation over, my mother, after gazing attentively at Mrs. Ord, who also looked at her, rose from her seat, and, approaching her, demanded whether she did not recognise the friend of her early youth, Elizabeth De Vere?

Scarcely had the question been uttered, when the friends, for such they had been, though long years had separated them, and different destinies had led to an ignorance of each other's fate, were, with tears in their eyes, embracing, and mutually presenting their children. You know the warmth of my dear mother's feelings; and they were now greatly

excited by this unexpected meeting with one for whom she had formerly entertained a strong attachment. Lady Delaward, who is all kindness, was scarcely less delighted than were the friends, who having evidently much to say to each other, she proposed a ramble in the garden; to which the lovely daughters of Mrs. Ord conducted us.

My mother told me last night, that Mrs. Ord had been the daughter of the Bishop of St. Asaph, one of the nearest neighbours of her father. Soon after the death of the bishop, who held his see during too short a period to have been enabled to make much provision for his daughter, she left the neighbourhood to reside with her aunt. At this time, my mother, having accompanied my grandfather to Italy, for the recovery of his health, in a rambling life, lost sight of her young friend; who, it appears, subsequently to her father's death, be-

stowed her hand on the Rector of Delaward, who had been the tutor, and continued, while he lived, the dear friend, of Lord Delaward. The worthy rector closed a life of virtuous usefulness three years ago, leaving his excellent wife and two daughters, with a son at college, but scantily provided with the gifts of fortune. The rectory becoming the residence of the present incumbent, Lord Delaward arranged the charming cottage we saw for the widow of his friend; and has settled a comfortable annuity on her for life.

All this Mrs. Ord told my mother, with tears of gratitude; interspersing the narrative with anecdotes of the rare generosity and untiring goodness of her benefactor, whose strength of mind, as she justly said, is only equalled by his kindness of heart. Mrs. Ord and her daughters have already learned to love Lady Delaward, who feels towards them as if

they were the friends of her youth, because they have stood in that relation to her husband.

No, dear Caroline! all that I see here proves to me that virtue and goodness are not, as you would fain persuade me, obsolete prejudices, or chimeras of a romantic brain. All around me breathes of content and peace, and I seem to exist in a purer atmosphere. The excellent qualities of my dear father and mother appear to proceed as much from a happy temperament as from a sense of duty. Theirs is the indulgent virtue that "rather loves to praise, than blame;" nay, I doubt whether they *could* blame—so gentle, so loving, is their nature. They would pity and weep over the errors they wanted courage to correct; while others would ward them off by a more steady and severe discipline. The Delawards will be the guardian angels of their children, watching each incipient approach of

error, and erasing every embryo of vice; while my dear parents would be the pitying angels, that try, like the recording angel of Sterne, to blot out with tears the spots they could not prevent.

I wish you were here, Caroline; this atmosphere of goodness would heal every worldly wound that makes your feelings rankle, and you would no longer be a sceptic in the salutary power of virtue. Never be one in the sincerity of the affection of your

AUGUSTA.

LORD ANNANDALE TO THE MARQUESS OF NOTTINGHAM.

I FIND myself, my dear Nottingham, in a devil of a dilemma! The Comtesse Hohenlinden, with whom, as you know, I last season formed a *liaison*, has heard of my approaching mar-

riage, and chooses to think herself exceedingly ill used. Now this is too preposterous—*mais quoi faire?* She has great influence in a certain clique, which is precisely that clique with which I most desire to stand well; and *Sa Seigneurie* is apt to be any thing but patient whenever any of her knights turn recreant to her charms, which (*entre nous soit dit*) are fast falling into the sear and yellow leaf—*raison de plus*, as you will say, for resenting any slight offered to their *manes*. We know how *méchante* she can be; and, I confess, I cannot anticipate with any degree of placidity "the slings and arrows of outrageous" ridicule she will let fly at my devoted head, if I do not find means to appease her.

I have thought of a mode of accomplishing this desirable point, and yet without sacrificing either my love for Lady Augusta or my interest with the comtesse. I shall per-

suade *Sa Seigneurie* that my marriage is an affair *d'intérêt, de convenance, de tout ce qu'elle voudra, enfin;* and that my affection is hers, and hers alone. The circumstance of Lady Augusta being an heiress will give a colour to this protestation, and the vanity of *la comtesse* will make her yield a ready credence to it. Do you not think my plan an excellent one? I have not been a diplomatist so long, without having acquired the art of temporising with contending interests; and I flatter myself I shall manage the affair *à merveille.*

I understand that Wilmot is *dished*, and his effects about to be served up to his hungry creditors. I want you to tell Joe Anderson to buy his carriage-horses for me; and if his wife's diamonds are to be sold, as I conclude they will be, send your factotum to bid for them for me. I will go as high as six thousand for them.

I wish you would call at Barker's, to see how the carriages I ordered are going on.

Yours ever,

ANNANDALE.

P.S. — Are the reports I have heard true, as to Wilmot having detected *madame son épouse* in a *liaison* with his friend Neville? I hope not; for, as according to the old proverb, in love as well as in sin, *Ce n'est que le premier pas qui coute*, I might be brought into a disagreeable scrape; for Neville knows that I was his predecessor in the good graces of Madame, and, to save his purse, would be quite capable of stating that fact; and though, judging by myself, *on ne revient pas toujours à ses premiers amours*, husbands are rather prone to this old-fashioned system, and make the past flame pay for the present. They manage these things better in France, *n'est-ce pas?*

MISS MONTRESSOR TO LADY A. VERNON.

You really grow incorrigible, *ma chère* Augusta. Was there ever any thing half so uncharitable as your wish of seeing me *plantée* at Delaward Park, in what *you* style an atmosphere of goodness, but which *I* more correctly name an atmosphere of dulness? I should die under the infliction.

And so, the modern Grandisons pity you, forsooth! And you, *pauvre petite*, sometimes think it is a lamentable affair to marry a man one is not in love with! It certainly is a melancholy fate to be wedded to a well-looking, well-bred, well-situated man of rank, with just talents enough to render him too useful to be left out of a cabinet, and just wisdom enough not to commit himself when in it; with fortune enough to prevent your

ever being *gênée*, and fashion enough to set the seal on yours. And this, you *sometimes* think a position to be pitied! *Fi-donc!* tell it not in Ascalon, publish it not in Gath.

What a charming little romance one might make out of your sentimental episode of "The Tutor's Wife, or Virtue Rewarded!" I have already sketched out the plan; but, the *dénoûment* would, I think, be different from what you would imagine. I would make your puritanical Lord Delaward's kindness the result of a *tendresse* for one of Mrs. Ord's fair daughters, instead of a friendship for his *ci-devant* tutor, her defunct spouse; Mademoiselle seduced; Lady Delaward *au désespoir;* Mrs. Ord, do. do.; and the wicked lord looking as foolish as Joseph Surface, when Lady Teazle was detected behind the screen. Shall I send this plot to George Sand? Only fancy what passionate declamations it would originate in

the prolific brain of the author of "Jacques!" George Sand would probably make Lady Delaward commit suicide, to leave her lord at liberty to atone for his wrongs to mademoiselle; and mademoiselle, not to be outdone in generosity, would follow her disinterested example: Monsieur Milord would go mad — in decency he could do no less: and Mrs. Ord and her remaining daughter would erect a white marble cenotaph to the memory of "One too good for life," meaning the betrayed; on the urn of which they would daily place bouquets of *pensées* and garlands of *immortelles*.

Is not this very French, and very sentimental! and are you not very much obliged to me for enlivening your "atmosphere of goodness" with this little sketch *à la Française? Addio, cara!* love me as I am, and do not be so *méchante* as to abandon your old friend

CAROLINE.

THE MARQUESS OF NOTTINGHAM TO LORD ANNANDALE.

My dear Annandale,—I have secured the horses for you, and the diamonds likewise. I do not approve your plan of conciliating the comtesse by a falsehood; for, I know she is capable of telling all her friends that you only marry an heiress because you are ruined, and that you are still more her slave than ever Even without the sanction of your avowal of continued *tendresse, sa seigneurie* has so lively an imagination, that this, and much more, she would be capable of propagating, as a salve to her mortified vanity. Such a story coming to the knowledge of your bride, (and how many spiteful, envious persons might convey the tale in an anonymous epistle!) would be very injurious to your domestic peace. You would not, I presume, present your young and pure wife

to *la comtesse* and her *clique*; that is, you would only let them meet at those *re-unions* of fashion at certain houses, when hundreds are congregated together, much as at the Zoological Gardens, or Vauxhall, and where a bow or a courtesy, *en passant*, is all that is required. I am no male prude, Heaven knows; but I do revolt at seeing men suffer their wives to live on terms of familiarity with women of whose bad conduct they can entertain no doubt. Look, for instance, at Lattimer and Ribblesworth allowing their wives to associate intimately with women whose *liaisons* have been neither few, nor apocryphal: such conduct is indelicate and disgusting. But, to return to your *comtesse*: she is at this moment *entiché* with young Dormer, and shews herself up with him, *sans ménagement*. Can you not act the jealous, accuse her of infidelity, and so break with her for ever! This measure will save you

from the disagreeable dilemma of excluding her from your wife's circles; to which let me advise you to admit none but women who are, as Cæsar said his wife should be, not only pure, but unsuspected. I think I hear you, with a Mephistophiles' smile on your lips, ask where such are to be found? But I aver we have still many, very many, though they are not to be discovered in the circle in which you most live; a fact which only *mauvais sujets*, like yourself, doubt. Yours ever,

NOTTINGHAM.

LORD DELAWARD TO LADY DELAWARD.

Grosvenor Square.

I HAVE thought of you, my dear Mary, ever since I left our happy home. It requires no slight exertion of volition to tear myself from

you; and this, our first separation, has taught me more than I had previously known — if that be possible — the happiness your presence can bestow. I miss you, I want your society, every moment; and I often ask myself the question, how I have lived before I became acquainted with you?

My business here shall be expedited as much as possible. I have ordered your suite of rooms to be newly furnished, and selected the colours I know you like. I have had a private staircase erected, to communicate with a suite above, which, I trust in God, will not be long tenantless; and a thousand feelings, all novel and delightful, have passed through my mind in making these arrangements.

Yesterday, I met Lord Riversford at dinner, at my club; and he, not knowing our intimacy

with the Vernons, announced to me, as news, the approaching marriage of Lady Augusta with Lord Annandale.

"He marries her wholly for her fortune," said Riversford, "which is odd, as we always considered him sufficiently rich not to be compelled to marry for money."

I replied, that the extreme beauty of Lady Augusta must always redeem him from the suspicion of interested motives in selecting her, even though she is an heiress.

"You surprise me!" said Riversford, "for *la Comtesse* Hohenlinden read to several of us, Annandale's sentimental epistle; in which he declared his unabated devotion to *her*, and alluded to his marriage, as an affair of *necessity*, not *choice*. Though the letter did not positively say that the *fiancée* was plain, the whole tenor of it left that impression on

our minds; and *sa seigneurie* confirmed it, by asserting, that *la jeune personne est laide à faire peur*, and by pitying *ce pauvre Annandale.*"

I find that Annandale has been a long time known to be a friend, and something more, to the *comtesse*; and if, as his letter to her implies, he intends to continue his intimacy with her, I foresee much unhappiness, nay, more, danger, to your beautiful, but giddy friend. With Lady Augusta's extreme youth and loveliness, her great susceptibility and inexperience, and with a husband whose overweening vanity, and want of fixed moral principles, render him a most unfit guide for her through the labyrinth of fashionable follies, I tremble for her, in the position which she seems likely to occupy. All that I hear of Annandale renders me more than ever indisposed to this marriage. Would to Heaven there were any means of averting it!

Lady Augusta is, as you, my beloved Mary, told me before I knew her, a being full of generous feelings and fine sympathies with all that is good and noble; but easily excited, with more imagination than reason, — which at her age is natural, — and somewhat spoiled by the injudicious indulgence of her parents. She is a creature who, under the guidance of an honest and wise man, who loved her, and whom she loved, might be led to attain as much virtue as ever dignifies human intelligence; but, in the hands of a weak or unprincipled one, may become a source of misery to herself, and to those who are attached to her.

It makes me gloomy to think of what her lot may be; and *I*, — who know the inestimable happiness of wedded life, when founded on affection, and cemented by similarity of taste, and congeniality of sentiment, — pity, with all my heart, this charming young woman,

who is about to form ties that, I fear, will never be rendered holy or indissoluble by any of the causes I have mentioned. Endeavour, my dear Mary, to impress on her reason, without alarming her innocence, the urgent necessity of a dignified reserve in her manners; and a scrupulous avoidance of all persons of her own sex, whatever may be their rank or other advantages, whose reputations are tarnished. Nothing so much tends to depreciate the respect that virtue ought to inspire, and to lessen the disgust of vice, as seeing those whose own career is irreproachable, live on habits of intimacy with women of whose errors they cannot entertain a doubt. Injurious as are the examples of bad conduct, the impunity which too frequently attends the perpetration is still more fatally pernicious. It is the privilege to do wrong, tacitly yielded to some individuals, in a social

system so partial and capricious as ours, that breaks down the barriers of decorum and morality; for, many a young and thoughtless woman has been led to ruin, by daily witnessing to what an extent imprudence and impropriety may safely be carried, when the pure and impure are received in the same circles, and on the same terms.

But, to quit this painful subject for one far more agreeable. I have been thinking, my sweet wife, that, could we induce your good father to take up his abode with us, we should all be the happier. *You* would not then have the apprehension of his loneliness, nor *he* the painful consciousness of having lost you. The more I experience the blessing of your presence, the more am I sensible how deeply he must regret separation from you. He would feel, in living with us, and sharing our domestic felicity, that, instead of losing

a daughter, he had found a son; and I should have the delight of knowing, that, in studying his happiness, I was securing yours. In three days, with the blessing of God, I shall be with you. May good angels guard my love, prays her devoted

DELAWARD.

LADY A. VERNON TO MISS MONTRESSOR.

INDEED, Caroline, your last letter shocked me; it seemed like sacrilege to read it beneath this roof, where every thing breathes of purity and peace. How little you know Lord Delaward, when you can, even in imagination, make him the hero of such a tale! When I have seen the dignified and exemplary Mrs. Ord, and her lovely and virtuous daughters, I have felt as if I had sinned against them in reading,

and that from the hand of a friend, a story founded on the supposed guilt of one of those sweet girls. It is this levity, this ridicule of all that is good and respectable, that makes you incur the censure of those who are not, like me, prone to forgive it, in the consideration of your better qualities. And yet, Caroline, there are moments when I ask myself whether I ought to continue a correspondence in which sentiments are often expressed, and principles avowed, which are in total variance with all that I have ever been taught to believe praiseworthy. If you cannot think and feel as I do, learn, at least, to respect my feelings, and do not, by revolting them, prevent my continuing your affectionate friend,

AUGUSTA.

MISS MONTRESSOR TO LADY A. VERNON.

You do with me as you will, *ma très chère; mais, en grace*, send me no more scolding letters, and I, *en revanche*, will try not to deserve them, by believing every one you know to be as good, proper, and wise, as yourself. Are you not satisfied. now? I shall be much mortified, if, after this act of contrition, you do not invite me to be your bridesmaid. Weddings bring thoughts of matrimony into people's heads, it is said, who had not, before, an idea on the subject; and who knows, if, among the chosen few selected to witness your nuptials, some lord of the creation may not, from thinking of the agreeable position of the bride, be led to pity the *disagreeable* one of the bridesmaid! which I hold to be one of the most lamentable to which poor spinsters are exposed. Fancy unhappy me, decked in virgin white, with down-

cast lids — a *figure de circonstance* which is, I believe, *d'usage* on such occasions, — wishing, all the time, that "God had made *me* such a man;" and that *I* was the proprietor of a certain baronial chateau in the north, a park in the south, a mansion in the west end of London, and a box at the opera; as well as a certain other and still more precious box, bound in brass and of large dimensions, similar to one whose sparkling contents had excited my envy the day before.

All these virgin wishes would naturally produce a pensive expression of countenance, which would as naturally be attributed to an amiable disposition, and a deep conviction of the serious duties which marriage imposes. A woman that so properly feels this conviction must, of course, be likely to make a good wife; and the man, with a free hand, an empty heart, and a full purse, who sees a poor brides-

maid wiping her eyes, as the chariot-and-four, with postilions with white favours, whisks off from her sight the blushing bride and exulting bridegroom, and does not speak comfort to her, *must* be a brute. Pity is, they say, akin to love; the pity once excited, (and what so likely to call it forth as such a scene as I have described?) who knows what may follow? and your poor friend may, from a weeping bridesmaid, be transformed, in due time, into a simpering bride. Do not mar the possibility of such a happy event, by not bidding to your nuptials your *amie dévouée*, CAROLINE.

LORD ANNANDALE TO THE MARQUESS OF NOTTINGHAM.

IF your letter of advice had reached me in time, my dear Nottingham, I should have followed it; but when did advice ever come in

time? Advice is like experience; it always comes when it is too late for use. My letter to *sa seigneurie* was despatched twice twenty-four hours before yours arrived. She has accepted the salve I offered to her wounded vanity; and has written to me, saying, that, in pity to my *malheur*, she will take Lady Annandale under her protection, and render her *à la mode*. I could have well dispensed with this excessive generosity on her part. *Mais quoi faire?* Were I to exclude her from Lady Annandale's circle, she would become an active enemy; and I know the extent of her talents for *tracasserie* too well, to expose myself to their indefatigable activity.

I hope much from the great beauty of Lady Augusta; for the *comtesse* will hardly seek to exhibit her *fanés* charms near the youthful bloom of Lady Annandale — a bloom near which all other women look *fade*. For my

part, I shall affect to think my wife *rien de remarquable* in the way of good looks; an insensibility which this vain woman will attribute to my devotion to her; and it will console her vanity, which I know to be as excessive as it is sensitive, to believe that there is one man in London who thinks her more irresistible than her beautiful rival; and that that man is her rival's liege-lord.

The settlements are drawn, and on the 14th all will be in readiness for the nuptial ceremony. Lord and Lady Vernon have insisted that it shall be performed, with primitive simplicity, in their village church; when, probably, the rector who christened *la belle* Augusta — and her papa, for aught I know — will read me a homily on the duties of husbands, similar to one I heard on a like occasion some three years ago. Heigh-ho! how old it makes one feel, to recall to memory such

a remarkable epoch in a man's life as a marriage! The late Lady Annandale was a very beautiful and amiable woman; *mais*, not content with being good herself, she would fain have rendered every one else equally excellent; and, most of all, her unworthy lord. Poor dear soul! how pale and sorrowful she used to look, when I gave utterance to any of my opinions on religious subjects, or laughed at the peccadilloes of people of fashion! She tried to reclaim me, as she called it; but she "did her spiriting gently," and an unkind or harsh word I never heard from her lips, nor one implying a reproach, unless it might be the last, when she said to me, "We have been too much separated on earth, my dear husband, by a want of similarity of sentiments: let us not, with my last breath I pray you, be divided in a future state, by a want of religion, and a strict performance of all it enjoins."

Poor Mary! no husband who fell short of the virtues of a Wilberforce would have satisfied her; and I, Heaven knows, was the last man on earth to aspire to such perfection. Well, to leave the gloomy past, and return to the cheerful future. On the 14th, I am to be made a happy man; and I want you, my dear Nottingham, to come and see the ceremony performed. Lord and Lady Vernon will expect you on the 12th, so do not disappoint *votre ami*,

ANNANDALE.

LADY A. VERNON TO MISS MONTRESSOR.

You are a sad madcap, my dear Caroline; and, were I to judge you by what you write, I should consider you to be as unfeeling as you are lively. You shall be present at a certain

solemn ceremony which takes place on the 14th; and the nearer it approaches, the more solemn it appears to me. I am persuaded that, had I paid my long visit to Delaward Park before I had accepted Lord Annandale, I never should have acted thus; and even now I shrink, with secret repugnance, from the fulfilment of the engagement I have so unthinkingly contracted. The letters I have received from Lord Annandale have influenced my feelings quite as much as the various conversations on the subject of marriage, and morals, which I have had with Lady Delaward. He writes as only a man of pleasure would write to a woman who had as much levity and as little sentiment as himself. Notwithstanding his letters breathe of passion, it is not the sort of passion I wish to inspire; and, though I am no casuist, there seems to me to be an immeasurable distance between passion and love. The first may be

entertained without respect for the object, but the second and nobler sentiment must be based on it. Lady Delaward has inspired love; and I (but why compare my unworthy self with one so infinitely superior?) have only engendered a *feeling* that the least estimable of my sex have often excited. And yet, may it not be, that Lord Annandale is incapable of entertaining love? This belief is, at least, more soothing to my *amour propre* than my previous supposition, and therefore I will indulge it.

The romance *à la George Sand,* that you composed on the subject of the amiable family of Mrs. Ord, falls to the ground; for, instead of a melancholy tale of error, her eldest and handsomest daughter is soon to be united to Mr. Neville, the worthy rector of Delaward; consequently, she will return to the home of her infancy, as its happy mistress. My dear father has determined to give young Ord

the next presentation of a living which, he expects, will soon revert to him — the prospect of which has diffused joy through the whole family.

Lord Delaward has been absent a week on business; and you should have witnessed the gloom and void, his absence spread over the whole circle here, and the cheerfulness his return caused, to feel how wholly the happiness of a family depends on the master. You should have seen the efforts, not always successful, made by Lady Delaward, to conceal her regret at his departure, her pensiveness during his absence, and her joy-beaming eyes at his return, to be sensible of the power of affection, and the happiness it can confer. But *you* will, perhaps, mock what appears to me so sacred; and such mockery I consider as little short of profanation. Never had I formed a notion of the comforts of a

well-ordered home until my visit here; for mine, though abounding in all the luxuries of life, wants the animating spirit that only a young master and mistress can diffuse. The regularity at Vernon Hall appeared monotonous to me; and the oft-beginning, never-ending, visitations of our country neighbours served only to render it more tedious. I had learned to dread the thrice-told tales of the deaf and old Lady Hamlyn, and the pointless *bon-mots* of her gouty lord. Lord and Lady Dorington's old news half set me to sleep; from which happy state I was only awakened by their mutual contradiction of, "Indeed, Lord Dorington, it was not so;" and, "You will permit me to know better, Lady Dorington." Then, the short-sightedness of our old rector, who never could distinguish me from my mother, the taciturnity of his curate, the loquacity of our doctor, and the

vulgarity of his fat wife, did not serve to enliven the periodical dinners at which these worthies graced the board of my paternal home.

Here, one day of every month is set apart for a grand dinner, given to all the nobility and gentry in the neighbourhood, who are conciliated by a dignified hospitality; but, not encouraged to that indiscriminate familiarity which, to the total interruption of all the rational occupations of the luckless owners, converts so many country-houses into inns. The high character Lord Delaward justly bears in his county led all his neighbours to form a favourable estimate of his wife, before they could judge from experience how far she was entitled to it. This is one of the many benefits arising from a high character: it enables him who possesses it to shed a lustre on all that immediately appertains to him; and happy,

thrice happy is she, who derives honour from him who has chosen her for his companion through life. Heigh-ho! will such be my lot? Perhaps, I the more desire it, because I feel that my giddiness and inexperience require the mantle of a husband's superiority to cover them, and protect me from their effects.

We leave this the day after to-morrow; and with deep regret shall I quit a spot where I have learned to respect what I have hitherto been more disposed to scoff at — the scrupulous discharge of duties; a spot where I have been taught to think better of others, and more modestly of myself, by having had an opportunity of comparing my own weak, and vacillating character, with that of those around me. I should, under any circumstances, lament my departure from Delaward Park, which I consider the temple of domestic happiness; but, when I reflect that I

leave it to fulfil an engagement that my heart renounces, I feel doubly grieved. The foolish, the unpardonable desire, instigated by vanity, of throwing off the shackles of childhood, first led me to listen to Lord Annandale's flatteries, and to overrule the prudent objections of my family; and the more reprehensible folly of not acknowledging my weakness, lest I should be considered a child, has induced me to persevere in it.

The nearer the time approaches for pronouncing the irrevocable vows, the more do I dread this marriage; and yet I have not courage to avow my feelings to those who possess the power of extricating me. A presentiment of evil continually hangs over my mind. It was not thus that Lady Delaward met her affianced husband at the altar! Fool —fool that I am, to compare myself in aught with one so good, so wise as she! Come to

me as soon as you can, but come without mockery on your tongue, or ridicule in your eye; for my heart is ill at ease, and my spirits are not in a tone to bear your *plaisanteries* just now.

Your affectionate

AUGUSTA.

MISS MONTRESSOR TO MADAME LA MARQUISE DE VILLEROI.

Vernon Hall.

PITY me, *ma chère* Delphine! for here I am, doing penance in one of the most *tristes châteaux* in which ever luckless dame was immured for her sins. *Imaginez vous—mais, non*, you *cannot* imagine any thing half so horrid; *ergo*, I must describe it. But, to begin at the beginning, as all tales should.

I told you in my last that I was to be present at the nuptials of a certain young friend of mine, *belle comme un ange*, and innocent, too, as an angel, if all we are told of them be true. My little friend has enough of romance in her composition to make half-a-dozen modern heroines — enough giddiness to compromise thrice that number — and enough sensibility to be rendered wretched at the effects which that giddiness may produce. She is the strangest imaginable *mélange* of all imaginable qualities. Proud, without being vain, generous to profusion, impatient of restraint, yet docile as an infant under the influence of tenderness: loving her parents excessively, yet jealous of their asserting any control over her actions — a paternal right which, to do them justice, they rarely, if ever, exercise. Her own feelings would lead her to desire to inspire a desperate, or, as you French call it,

une grande passion, à la Byron. Unhappily, too, she has been lately present at the marriage of a friend dearer to her than I am (though, strange to say, that friend is a stern Mentor, too), and she has also resided some time at the house of that friend, whose stately happiness has awakened the dormant pride of my little beauty. The consequence is, forsooth, that she is no longer satisfied with the passion of Lord Annandale, and ardently desires to inspire a grave, a dignified, a respectful sentiment. Ha, ha! the very thought of this fantastic foolery makes me laugh. Having accepted the first offer she received (for she is yet little more than sixteen, and has not been presented in the world), she discovers that she does *not* love the man she has promised to wed; yet, is ashamed of revealing this circumstance to her parents, lest they should consider her a weak, vacillating child; which

is precisely what she is, and a spoiled one into the bargain, by the unexampled indulgence of her doting father and mother.

All that I have now told you, Lady Augusta has written to me; and a little encouragement on my part would have led her to be equally confidential with her friends. But, this encouragement I did not, would not give her, for reasons of my own; nay, I have done all in my power to induce her to fulfil her engagement. Be it known to you, *belle et bonne* Delphine, that, being extremely tired of the society of *madame ma tante* in the country, and extremely anxious to pass the ensuing season in London, my sole chance for the accomplishment of this desideratum, is to get Lady Augusta converted from a giddy and useless *demoiselle* just emerging from her governess and nursery, into a *dame à la mode;* a useful chaperon, in whose bril-

liant mansion in town I may secure myself a *séjour*. I am eight years, *bien sonnés*, the senior of my friend, and have acquired an influence over her, of the extent of which even she is unconscious. Should her lord disapprove of my spending as much time as I choose beneath his roof, I can always, by insinuating to her that he treats her as a child, excite her to rebel against his power. At present, however, I see no probability of being necessitated to practise this stratagem, for, he appears very tractable.

I had intended taking up my abode for the season with *notre amie, la comtesse; mais, helas!* some reports of her impropriety of conduct, that (*entre nous soit dit*) admit not of denial or defence, have reached *ma tante*, who would not hear of my resting a single night beneath her roof; nay, who will not hear of my keeping up any intimacy

with her. I had, therefore, no other chance of visiting the metropolis, except that of converting Lady Augusta Vernon into Madame la Comtesse d'Annandale; and this desirable metamorphosis I have accomplished.

On my arrival here, I found *ma petite* heroine, a second Niobe, all tears: her *futur* evidently mortified at her lachrymose propensity; her papa and mamma all wonder at her melancholy; and a certain Marquess of Nottingham looking as if he too could have wept, merely for the pleasure of keeping her company. This, you will allow, was an unpromising commencement; yet, I have, by the exercise of tact — that virtue acquired in your country, and which is more useful than all the others combined — managed to restore a good understanding between all the parties.

I persuaded the sapient papa and mamma, that all their daughter's chagrin arose from

regret at leaving *them*; and won their hearts by this protestation. I insinuated to *le futur*, that, when his wife had an opportunity of comparing him with other men, she would be better able to appreciate her good fortune in having secured him. Had you seen the radiant smile with which this compliment was received, you would have acknowledged, that flattery is worth all the cosmetics in the world for beautifying those to whom it is administered. From that moment, Lord Annandale was my friend, and a sort of confidential intimacy is established between us, which I mean to turn to good account. There is one person here, however, whom I cannot manage; and I hate him, for that reason. I allude to the Marquess of Nottingham, who seemed, from the first moment of our acquaintance, to recede from my advances with a sort of instinctive dread, or dislike. I have carefully concealed my discovery of this

sentiment, and continued to treat him with cheerful courtesy; but I have, nevertheless, frequently caught his eyes fixed on me with a scrutinising glance, more expressive of distrust than good-will.

His glances have not, however, all been confined to me; for, I have detected them fixed on Lady Augusta, with a mingled expression of admiration and pity, that was not to be mistaken. Her beauty, which I must admit to be of the first order, seemed to produce an overpowering effect on him when he was first presented to her. Her melancholy and *naïveté* have, apparently, increased his admiration; and I predict that, before a year, he will be *l'ami de maison*, instead of simply *l'ami de milord*, as at present.

Nothing could be more sentimental and *larmoyant* than the eight-and-forty hours passed here previous to *la noce*. Talk of the

ennui of the half-hour before dinner, passed in the library or drawing-room, while waiting for some unpolite guest, or dilatory *chef de cuisine!* It is nothing to the *ennui* of the hours preceding a wedding, as I can now testify. Fifty times I expected that Lady Augusta, in a fit of sensibility, would have declared her aversion from the fulfilment of the contract; and I am sure that, had she done so, Lord Nottingham would have rejoiced. I prevented this step, however, by drawing the most brilliant prospects of the future to her; but still more, by my old stratagem, dwelling on the animadversions to which such a proceeding would expose her, and the certainty of being, for years to come, treated as a child by her father and mother. This last argument was, as heretofore, irresistible, and led her to the altar of Hymen, a reluctant, because an unloving bride.

Yet, even I—though little used to the

melting mood, Heaven knows—felt some uneasy twitching in the *muscle cru* called heart, when I saw the dreadful paleness her face assumed, and the large drops that chased each other down her young fair cheeks, as she approached to pronounce the irrevocable vows. Lord Nottingham, who attended as bridesman, was almost as *triste* as the bride; and Lord and Lady Vernon wept nearly as much as if death, and not a husband, was about to take off their darling. Previously to my arrival, I had meditated a little romance, of winning the heart of the bridesman by enacting the sentimental; but an hour in Lord Nottingham's company convinced me of the utter hopelessness of such an attempt, and so I at once relinquished it. I think I could much more easily have captivated the bridegroom; for he is a vain, a very vain man, and so prone to admire himself, that any woman, not quite

a fright, who vied with him in doing homage to his attractions, would stand a fair chance of being rewarded by his gratitude.

But, to return to the wedding. There we stood, more like some solemn procession than a hymeneal one: the bride clinging to her father's arm to the last, and looking like a maiden-blush rose, twined to a venerable oak, which bent down to shelter it from the storm; Lady Vernon, pale and weeping, leaning on Lord Nottingham, who seemed nearly as disconsolate as herself; and I, escorted by Lord Annandale, who was replying to my judiciously administered compliments, by warmly repeated invitations to spend some months with them.

Suppose, now, the due number of tears shed (and I protest there were enough to fill, at least, some fifty lachrymatories); the necessary responses pronounced, most inaudibly by

the bride, and sonorously by the bridegroom; the nuptial benediction given; and the sobbing Lady Annandale torn with gentle violence from the arms of her mother, and placed in the travelling-carriage of her lord; which I saw driven off, with much the same feelings as those with which a shipwrecked sailor, on a desert island, beholds a vessel pass at a distance, which might have rescued him from his solitary fate. Lord Nottingham, in pity, agreed to remain two or three days here, and I have promised to stay a week; at the expiration of which time I return to my aunt's, whose house, disagreeable as I have hitherto considered it, is less *triste* than this gloomy mansion, now that it is bereft of its sole attraction — the fair Augusta. In a fortnight, I am to join the Annandales in London; where I anticipate much enjoyment, *en revanche* for this dull visit.

You would have smiled, as I did, *en cachette*, had you witnessed the dinner given in honour of the nuptials; and the host and hostess, between smiles and tears — the latter, however, greatly preponderating — doing the honours to guests who, with the exception of Lord Nottingham and myself, might have served as specimens for a zoological garden, if one was formed, to exhibit the *lusus naturæ* of the human race, instead of animals. In France, where there are no old people, either in dress or mind, you have nothing like the antediluvian figures that every country neighbourhood in England produces. In your gay land, you have old children, who have only exchanged, but not thrown by, their rattles; while here, most, if not all the aged people, give one the idea that they never could have been young children.

In the innocence of my heart, I attempted

a few *plaisanteries*, at the expense of some of the lame, blind, and deaf, who formed a part of the *Hôpital des* INCURABLES assembled round the dinner-table: but the pragmatical Lord Nottingham maintained a look of immovable gravity; nay, rebuked me with a remark, that he never saw any thing risible in the infirmities of age. I have now described the delectable pleasures of an English wedding to you; and bestowed my tediousness half in pity to your expressed curiosity, and my own want of a more agreeable occupation. Write to me how you amuse yourself: that's the best way of telling how you are; for one is never ill when amused. Adieu, *chère* Delphine!

Votre amie affectionnée,

CAROLINE.

THE MARQUESS OF NOTTINGHAM TO EDWARD MORDAUNT, ESQ.

Vernon Hall.

I PROMISED, my dear Mordaunt, to write to you a description of our friend Annandale's bride; but, were I to tell you even half what I think of her, you would accuse me of exaggerating her charms as much as we believed Annandale to have done when he described her to us. Annandale confined his panegyrics to her beauty only; and even to that, I think, he did not render justice; but, he said nothing of the innocence, the candour, and, above all, the modesty of her manner, which, in my eyes, constitute her greatest charm. She possesses a thousand attractions; each and all irresistible for one who requires more than mere beauty, however brilliant, to satisfy a fastidious taste; or rather, let me say, that craving for the ideal, which

haunts every heart not quite seared or sullied by contact with the world.

Lady Annandale is precisely the realisation of an enthusiast's dream ; and a poet would be ready to prostrate himself before her whom the common herd would dare to profane with their love. Well may Annandale triumph at obtaining such a prize—a prize for the possession of which thousands will envy him; yet *I*, who am penetrated with a sense of her all-subduing charms, would not accept her hand to-morrow, were it offered to me with the same symptoms of evident distaste which marked all her conduct to him, from the moment he arrived, until that which saw her torn from the arms of her mother. This inestimable boon was not

> " Yielded with coy submission, modest pride,
> And sweet reluctant amorous delay ;"

but with tears and undisguised indifference.

He felt not this; but *I* would have preferred death, to fulfilling an engagement which seemed so painful to *her*. Can she have formed another attachment? Yet, no; for, knowing as she must do, the unbounded affection of her parents, she could not doubt their readiness to extricate her from this engagement, or consent to her contracting another, if her happiness, which is their sole and whole object in life, depended on such a measure.

Having witnessed the repelling coldness with which she shrank from Annandale whenever he approached her, a thousand vague notions have entered into my mind, as to the probable motives of her extraordinary conduct. More than once I have fancied that she repented her intended alliance, and wished to annul it; but, that a friend of hers, considerably her senior, has by her influence induced her to complete it. This friend is a Miss Mon-

tressor — handsome, clever, and accomplished; but with a freedom of manner, and peculiar expression of countenance, that prepossessed me most unfavourably against her, before I had been an hour in her society. Instead of betraying any sympathy in the feelings of her youthful friend, she *brusqued* her to a certain degree; nay, more, I frequently caught her eyes fixed on her, with an expression of contemptuous pity for the weakness, as her looks seemed to imply, of which Lady Augusta was guilty. She was very assiduous in her attentions to Annandale, and seemed, at a glance, to discover what we have long known; namely, that he is a vain man, and likes flattery. He was loud in her praises, and has invited her to spend the season in town with them. What an ill-chosen associate for so young and inexperienced a woman as Lady Annandale! I hope he may not have cause to repent his invitation; and that her levity and freedom of manner

may not entail on his wife any of the ill-natured animadversions in which the *cliques* of London are so prone to indulge, and for which Miss Montressor seems so well disposed to furnish cause.

A bold woman is, to me, one of the most offensive objects on earth. I have always felt disgust for such; though it has often been mitigated by recollecting in how many instances their husbands have been conducive to this fault, by their want of delicacy, or by the improper associations they have allowed them to form. But, when an *unmarried* woman emancipates herself from all the constraint that modesty and propriety prescribe, my disgust is unmitigated by pity. I am one of the few who maintain that modesty may survive the virtue it was meant to guard; but that virtue rarely, and only then, by chance, or calculation, outlives modesty.

I go hence in a day or two, on a visit to the Delawards, who reside in this county. I have staid here to console Lord and Lady Vernon, who were intrusted to the tender mercies of Miss Montressor for consolation; and they are to come to Delaward Park, as soon as they have left Miss Montressor with her aunt. They are the most primitive people you ever saw; full of goodness and warmth of heart, and knowing almost as little of the world as does their daughter, whom they love with all the blind idolatry peculiar to parents who, having married late in life, have only one object on which to lavish all their affection. To be able to appreciate the natural superiority of a creature, who could be so idolised, and by such excellent people, without being wholly spoiled, one ought to have seen her as I did, during the last three days; when, though oppressed by the deepest melancholy, her con-

sideration for the happiness of others was always apparent. I could discover strong feeling, and no little portion of self-command, in the yet unformed character of this lovely woman; who, though little more than sixteen, displays the embryo of qualities which, if rightly directed, might render her as great an ornament to her sex, by her conduct, as she is at present, by her matchless beauty. I cannot think of her in the hands of our good-natured, but worldlyminded friend, Annandale, and the not good-natured, and more worldly-minded Miss Montressor (two beings totally incapable of comprehending her), without trembling for her fate.

The day of the nuptials the disconsolate old couple returned to their now gloomy mansion, the sunbeam that illumed it having fled. My feelings were in unison with theirs, and they were evidently sensible of my sympathy,

which seemed to comfort them: while even the assiduities of Miss Montressor partook so much of the hardness and bantering tone that pervades her character; that they shrank from the commonplace consolations she offered.

At any other period I might have smiled at the guests assembled to do honour to the bridal feast; for a more strange assortment of indigenous specimens of the gentry of a remote province, I never saw. Cruikshank would have made a fortune by representing them as illustrations of all the maladies to which senility is heir. But, when one heard the praises, "loud and deep," of the bride, that fell from their lips, even while regaling on the dainties before them, it was impossible, for me at least, to smile. No feeling of this nature checked the malicious smiles of Miss Montressor: she is, I am quite convinced, a very heartless woman.

The seat that Lady Annandale used to occupy was filled by a certain old Lady Hamlyn: who, extremely deaf, was, like most deaf persons, very anxious to hear all that was said at table. Her querulous demands of, "I beg your pardon — pray, what did Lady so and so, or Lord so and so, say?" called forth a repetition of the lamentations for the departure of Lady Annandale, or praises of the turtle and venison. Truth to say, the laudations bestowed on the bride, and the luxurious dinner, were nearly equal in quantity and quality.

"Poor dear Lady Augusta!—what a loss to us all! Well, well, it is what all must come to!"

"What did Lady Dorington say?" screamed out Lady Hamlyn.

"What delicious venison!" exclaimed another.

"What did she say?" again asks Lady Hamlyn.

"Only that the venison was very delicious," answers Lord Dorington, spitefully repeating what one speaker had said in place of another.

"I asked what Lady Dorington said," reiterated Lady Hamlyn, angrily.

"Oh! she was only remarking that marriage is what we must all come to," replied Lord Dorington, with a grave face.

"*All* come to, indeed! I don't see any one here, except the young laughing lady there," looking at Miss Montressor, "who is likely to come *to that*."

During this bald, disjointed chat, Lord and Lady Vernon continued to gaze upon the place where their lovely daughter used to sit; and many a tear did I mark stealing down the

pale cheek of the fond mother, as she turned from it, to seek sympathy in the glance of her husband. I could have shamed my manhood, and wept too, when, on entering the drawing-room, I saw the now silent harp, that answered so melodiously to the taper fingers of the beautiful Augusta; the flowers she loved, drooping on their stands; and the different objects of feminine utility she was wont to use, all of which retain their places, though she they were destined for is far away. How I could have worshipped this creature! But it is madness to indulge in such a thought.

Believe me, my dear Mordaunt, yours ever.

NOTTINGHAM.

THE LADY AUGUSTA VERNON TO LADY DELAWARD.

Ere I seek my pillow, dearest Mary, I must open my oppressed heart to you. Ah! why had I not courage to do so, before it was too late? But, I am a very child; and, alas! with more of the wilfulness of childhood than generally falls to the lot of even the weakest of my sex. To-morrow, Mary, I bestow my hand on one, whom, every moment proves to me, I do not, cannot love.

I made this discovery even in the hour that my entreaties won the reluctant consent of my dear and too indulgent father, and mother; but false pride, and the shame of being considered childish, and vacillating, have induced me to conceal the real state of my feelings from them. Often, while at Dela-

ward Park, have I been tempted to make to you this unhappy avowal. Why, why did I not? for then, all would have been well. It was not, my dear friend, until, beneath your roof, I was a witness to the happiness to be derived from a marriage of affection, that my eyes were quite opened to the loveless, cheerless destiny I had, by my own folly, prepared for myself. But, even then, I struggled against the conviction. I tried to think, that when I saw Lord Annandale again, my reluctance might decrease; but the result has been otherwise — far, far otherwise; and I am the victim of my own wilfulness!

Why do I tell you all this *now;* when, before the avowal reaches you, my fate will be irrevocably sealed? Alas! I divulge it to you, because my very soul is steeped in sadness; and I have no one here, to whom it can be revealed, that would pity me, except those from

whose affectionate hearts I would conceal it for ever. To leave the home of my infancy, even with one beloved, would always have been attended with pain; but to leave it with one for whom I entertain only indifference, is dreadful. A fearful presentiment of evil oppresses me. I feel as if I were about to abandon this place for ever; and now, for the first time, I am penetrated with a sense of all the tender, the too indulgent, affection of my dear father and mother, and all the gratitude it has excited in my breast.

During the last few days, I have often thought, that to dwell here, as I have hitherto dwelt, surrounded by loving faces and affectionate protectors, would be happiness enough. Why did I ever wish for any other? How empty, how puerile, appear now the brilliant dreams in which my prurient fancy has indulged, of the gaieties, the splendours, of a

fashionable life in London! when I should shine, for my brief minute, among the evanescent meteors of the season, that flash and disappear. I turn from these my frivolous anticipations, at this moment, with feelings such as I might experience on the bed of death; and wonder, and grieve, that they could ever have dazzled me. *He*, who appeared as the necromancer who was to conduct me through the magnificent scenes he so glowingly described, now looks like the baffled mountebank that manœuvres his puppets before children, who, having examined their mechanism, and detected the springs that move them, despise alike the exhibition and the exhibitor. Had I never witnessed the happiness—the rational and soul-satisfying happiness—which you enjoy, I might never have felt the reluctance I now experience to enter a career of dissipa-

tion, piloted by one who seems to think pleasure the end and aim of life.

I am sensible that I stand perilously in need of a high-minded and discerning monitor, to guide me through the mazes which I must enter; one who could not only give me a clue to the labyrinth, but still linger by my side, to support and cheer me. I require some fond heart in which I can confide — some firm mind, on which I can depend; and now, with a fearful consciousness of the almost vital necessity of these safeguards, I have forged fetters that bind me to one nearly as blind as — nay, more blind than myself: for, my inexperience awakens a salutary alarm, while he is steeled and dulled, by custom, to the dangers I can discern, but know not how to escape. I feel as if, in having precluded myself from ever forming a marriage of affection, I had closed

the only door to happiness that ever was open to me. Tell me, in pity tell me, my dear Mary, that, though I have missed that portal of felicity, there is still another, less seductive, yet not to be slighted—that of content; and I will endeavour to reach it.

Lord Annandale has never demanded why I wept, why I was plunged in sadness, ever since he came to claim my hand. Had he questioned me, I might have been saved; for such a demand would have led to an avowal of my feelings. *Now* it is too late; and I count the hours of freedom that still remain to me, as one on the bed of death does those of his fast-fleeting existence. Never have I thought of the dread hereafter so frequently, nor with so little alarm, as during the last few days. It no longer seems terrific to quit this fair earth, and the blue skies that canopy it, when one's fate is linked with that of a

being from whom separation would occasion no sorrow. No! it appears to me as if the rending of such chains would console me for bursting the chain of life. Think of—pity—and, above all, love, your

AUGUSTA.

THE MARQUESS OF NOTTINGHAM TO EDWARD MORDAUNT, ESQ.

Delaward Park.

MY friend Delaward is indeed a lucky man, my dear Mordaunt; for, he has chosen a woman whom it is impossible to see without admiring, or to know without esteeming. I never saw a *ménage* that presents so tempting an example to a Benedic to forswear his solitary state, as Delaward's. One soul, one mind,

seems to animate him and his lovely wife. Here is no disgusting display of the uxoriousness so often and indelicately protruded before friends, during the first months of wedded life, and as often followed by the indifference that succeeds unwisely indulged passions, leading to their inevitable result—satiety. No! perfect confidence, warm admiration, profound respect, and boundless content, reign between this happy couple, and bid fair to continue while they live. Lady Delaward is at once the most dignified and simple-mannered of her sex: one, before whom no man could utter a light word, or breathe an unholy thought. An atmosphere of pure and elevated sentiment seems to environ her; and all who approach are influenced by it. There is nothing chilling or repelling in her demeanour; for, though she has all the dignity of a matron, she has all the gentleness of a

child: but, there is an indescribable charm around her, that precludes the entrance of the vulgar and commonplace topics with which we entertain the generality of her sex; or rather, to speak more accurately, the fashionable portion of it.

To tell Lady Delaward any one of the piquant anecdotes, or *histoires à double entente*, that are daily related to the women of our coterie in London, would require an impudence that not even A—— possesses; though he, Heaven knows, is no pauper in that social bronze which, like the famed Corinthian brass, contains all the elements of durity, additionally hardened and consolidated by the fierce fires to which it has been subjected. I worship that native purity which innocence alone can give, and which shines forth in every look, word, and action, of Lady Delaward; while I turn with disgust from

that affected prudery, arising, if not from a participation, at least from a knowledge of evil, which induces certain of our ladies to cast down their eyes, look grave, and shew the extent of their knowledge, or the pruriency of their imaginations, by discovering even in a harmless jest something to alarm their experienced feelings. I respect that woman, whose innate purity prevents those around her from uttering aught that could wound it, much more than her whose sensitive prudery continually reminds one that she is *au fait* of every possible interpretation of which a word of doubtful meaning admits.

And Lady Delaward, this "chaste and fair," but not inexpressive she—for she talks as angels might be imagined to talk—is the friend of Lady Annandale, and loves her as a younger sister. Nothing is more captivating to me than a cordial affection between two

young and beautiful women. Perhaps it is its rarity that constitutes its charm; for nothing is more rare, notwithstanding the well-acted *rôles* of friendship we continually see got up in society between women who entertain a mutual detestation.

The unstable basis of such ephemeral fancies is selfishness; hence, it is not to be wondered at that the fragile superstructures soon totter and fall to the ground. A share in an opera-box, similarity of pursuits, a knowledge of each other's *liaisons*, — which precludes embarrassment in those quartettos that invariably occur wherever these female Pylades and Orestes appear, are the motives of half the friendships existing among ladies of fashion. They herd continually together, address each other by the most loving epithets — pour into the ears of their admirers a thousand secrets of the concealed personal and moral

defects, and the numberless artifices of their dear friends, to which they have recourse, in order to supply the want of beauty. It is thus we learn that poor Lady so and so, or Mrs. so and so, would be the most delightful person in the world, only that she happens to have every physical and almost every moral fault that ever fell to the lot of woman ; but, the greater part of which, owing to the blindness or stupidity of the world, are left to be discovered by the discriminating eyes of her dear friend, who relates them with such professions of regret at their existence.

Of how many women, whose complexions I have praised, have I not been told by their supposed devoted friends, and not without a smile at my ignorance, that they wore rouge ; until I almost began to doubt whether such a thing as a real rosy cheek, proceeding from

pure bright blood circulating within the epidermis, were a desideratum possible to be found. Every very fair woman I saw, was, as the *sincere* friends of each informed me, indebted, not to nature, but art, for that delicate tint. In short, their frank and explicit confessions brought me to consider every handsome woman as a sort of modern Thisbe, peeping behind a wall of white and red. But this was not all. The jetty locks I admired were, I was informed, the properties of the ladies they adorned, only because they had *bought* them; the pearly teeth I praised, were *chefs d'œuvre* from some fashionable dentist; the dark eye-brows that struck my fancy, owed, I was told, their rich black to the newly invented die; and even the red lips, emulating the hue of coral, had been tinged, as my informant stated, by a chemical preparation. Such being the disclosures made by

friends in fashionable life, it is not much to be wondered at that I am incredulous as to the sincerity of the sentiment of friendship between fine ladies.

I have hitherto only believed it to exist in the mind of an acknowledged beauty towards some remarkably plain but well-bred woman, who served as a foil to her, and did not hate her for her own inferiority. I am, however, no longer a sceptic as to female friendship. Lady Delaward, young and beautiful, feels it, in the utmost signification of the term, for Lady Annandale. Hers are not the praises that artful women, themselves handsome, think it prudent to bestow on any other beauty named in their presence; cunningly selecting her defects for their exaggerated eulogiums, and leaving unnoticed, in their panegyrics, the charms that would have justified them.

No; Lady Delaward, when I extolled the personal fascinations of Lady Annandale, simply answered, "Yes, she is the most lovely person I ever saw." But, when I said that she appeared very amiable, her countenance sparkled with animation, and her cheeks became tinged with a brighter hue; her whole face, while under the glowing effects of her warm affection for her friend, reminding me of one of those fine alabaster vases, with a light in it, that displays even more its own spotless purity, than it illumines the objects around it.

"You should have known Augusta," she said, "as I have done, since her infancy, to be able to appreciate all the admirable qualities she possesses; qualities which not even the undue indulgence of her doting father and mother has been able to obscure."

"I do not like her friend, Miss Montressor," observed I.

Lady Delaward was silent; but a grave expression stole over her face.

"Neither do we," replied Delaward; "and I heartily wish Lady Annandale may see as little of her as possible, for I think her"——

"Hush! my dear Delaward," said his wife, gently; "we must not prejudice others against her."

At this moment a letter was brought to Lord Delaward, who, having broke the seal, handed its enclosure to Lady Delaward, who exclaimed, "A letter from dear Augusta!"

She eagerly opened it; and I remarked that, as she perused it, her brow indicated that its contents gave her pain. This sentiment evidently increased as she continued to read; and, at length, she rose and quitted the room, as if overpowered by her feelings.

Delaward hastily followed her, and left me,

I candidly confess, experiencing for the first time in my life, an insatiable curiosity. Lady Annandale has, probably, in this letter, explained the source of the sadness in which I saw her plunged the three days previous to her marriage. How I should like to read it! It is strange, it is unaccountable, the deep interest I take in her. Had I beheld her all gaiety and smiles, I should, if I know myself, have merely thought of her as a beautiful girl, like one of those lovely creatures we see, admire, and forget. But her melancholy and apparent indifference towards Annandale, have invested her with a much deeper interest for me than her beauty, faultless as it is, could ever have excited. What can that letter have contained, to awaken such regret as was displayed in Lady Delaward's looks and manner?

I must leave you; a necessity, at which the length and dulness of this epistle will make you rejoice. Yours ever,

NOTTINGHAM.

MISS MONTRESSOR TO LA MARQUISE DE VILLEROI.

HERE, I am, *chère et belle amie*, once more *chez ma tante*, who is even more *ennuyeuse* than ever, which is saying a great deal; and who preaches morality to me from morning until night. You should have seen your poor friend demurely seated, *vis-à-vis* to the patriarchal Lord and Lady Vernon, in their family coach, returning to the temple of *ennui*, as I style the mansion of *madame ma*

tante; listening to the oft-beginning, never-ending praises of their daughter, who, if they are to be credited, is a perfect paragon of perfection; while I know her to be nothing more nor less than a very pretty, capricious, spoiled child, wilful and froward in no ordinary degree. Perhaps it is this very knowledge that makes me feel attached to Augusta; for, paradoxical as it may appear, it is easier to pardon the faults, than the virtues of our friends; because the first excite a self-complacency always agreeable; and the second, a sense of humiliation, which indisposes us towards the inflictor.

After all, it is a very agreeable thing to have a doting old papa and mamma — doting in the double sense of the word — who look at all one's thoughts, words, and actions, through the bright medium of affection, and not through the dull one of reason, as my

sapient aunt views mine. I really believe she considers me as nothing short of a very wicked person; for, the homilies with which she indulges me on every possible occasion, prove how greatly she imagines me to stand in need of them.

The Vernons, *mari et femme*, are gone to the modern Grandisons, as I call Lord and Lady Delaward; where they are to remain some time, to be consoled for the loss of their daughter. They had made up their minds, I fancy, to accompany Lady Annandale, to town; but, I advised Lord Annandale not to encourage this intention, unless he wished to be the subject of ridicule to all London, by importing this antediluvian couple (in their old-fashioned coach, which resembles the ark of Noah) into the fashionable world, to shock universally, and be universally shocked. I tried to enlighten my friend

Augusta on this point; but she, who knows nothing of the manners of society, was indignant at even the supposition that her dear father and mother could ever be *de trop* any where; so I left her to indulge in her parental illusion, and directed my counsel to her lord, who is more tractable.

Lord Nottingham preceded the Vernons to Delaward Park. I like not that man; and, I fancy, there is an instinctive dislike between us. He is the *beau idéal* of an Englishman: proud, reserved, and dignified, with a degree of self-respect that precludes him from ever compromising himself; and with that scrupulous good-breeding, which deprives those who dislike him of the pleasure of attacking him. He is a man whom it is impossible to ridicule; nay more, he imposes a certain respectful restraint, even on his opponents, by his high bearing and polished manners.

His mind seems to be very cultivated, and his person and face are remarkably *distingués*; the highest praise, in my opinion, that can be accorded to male good looks. He is the sort of person *à faire fureur à Paris*, and to remain wholly unmoved by his success; and yet, "this most potent, grave, and reverend signior," is evidently captivated by the *naïve* loveliness of a spoiled child of sixteen, having hardly deigned to bestow a glance on the matured charms of your friend. I tried him with all my witcheries,—let fly a shower of *bon-mots*, *réparties*, and brilliant anecdotes, that would have covered me with laurels in your *recherché* circle in the Rue St. Honoré; but, they fell as unheeded as a display of fireworks before an astronomer examining the *début* of the last new comet. I then assailed him with piquant criticisms on all the modern French authors: talked of the

vigorous power of Victor Hugo; the mysticism and sentimentality of Balzac; the passion and eloquence of George Sand; the maritime descriptions of Eugène Sue; the *comique* of Paul de Kock; and the *hardiesse* of Jules Janin. The man, instead of being charmed, looked perfectly petrified; and, without replying to me, turned to Augusta, and asked her, with a look of undissembled alarm, whether she had read those authors? A weight seemed taken off his mind when she answered in the negative, and stated, that the only modern French books she was in the habit of perusing, were those of Chateaubriand, De Lamartine, and Casimir de la Vigne.

"They are the writers that I also read," said Lord Nottingham, "and the ones that I should place in the hands of a wife, or sister."

"You surely cannot be so very English — which, with me, is a synonyme for prudish — as to object to a young lady's perusal of the authors I have named?" asked I; "authors, whose works contain the truest pictures of actual life?"

"There is much, very much in actual life, Miss Montressor, of which I should wish a wife or sister of mine, to remain in total ignorance. On this point I am ready to exclaim with the poet,

> 'Give me a friend, within whose well-poised mind
> Experience holds her seat. But let my bride
> Be innocent, as flowers, that fragrance shed,
> Yet know not they are sweet.'"

"Oh! you," I resumed, "are one of those who would treat women as pretty puppets, formed for your playthings, and not admit us to a free communion of that knowledge of which you are so proud?"

"I would debar your sex from no part of the knowledge of which ours ought to be proud; but, I do not think, in proscribing the modern authors you have enumerated, such a motive could be fairly attributed to me. I would have the reading of women confined to works of which the morality and purity might serve to strengthen their own; and I can no more approve of placing in their hands books that tend to make them acquainted with all the vices that sully human nature, however well portrayed, than I should approve their witnessing the scenes where such vices are committed, as a useful philosophical lesson. Women, Miss Montressor, according to my opinion, should know no more of the crimes of human nature, than they do of the fearful maladies to which it is subject. You would not have our matrons study anatomy, or visit the hospitals, in order to see to what infir-

mities flesh is heir; it is enough for them to be aware that mortal beings are sometimes sorely smitten by loathsome diseases, without investigating, or studying them: so, is it sufficient for them to know, that vice and error exist, without analytically examining the symptoms, causes, and effects, so artistically displayed in the authors to whom you have referred."

"You, probably, think we are only good, because we are what you would call innocent, and what I term ignorant, Lord Nottingham!"

"Happy and charming, I am sure you are, only while you are innocent," he replied; "for, a knowledge of evil, even though it guard from a participation in it, leaves a stain on the purity of the female mind, and a cloud on its brightness: for a high-souled woman, while abhorring the crimes she discovers, where she thought all was fair, must pity while abhorring; and deep pity dims happiness."

Augusta listened to him with an attention I never before saw her pay to any one; her eyes were fixed on his expressive face, which, always handsome, was now lighted up with increased animation; and I marked her turn from him, to look at the man who was, the next day, to become her husband, with a glance in which neither affection nor approbation was visible — to my eyes, at least. She was probably at that moment drawing a comparison between the two, not advantageous to the latter.

In this little discussion, and during the pauses of Lord Nottingham, Lord Annandale defended my favourite authors with more zeal than ability; consequently, his flimsy arguments rather injured than served my cause.

"Surely, my dear Nottingham, you are unjustly severe?—Bah! *mon ami*, you are too prudish. What can be more droll, or more

amusing, than some of the scenes in the works you have censured? I quite agree with Miss Montressor in admiring them.—Well, you may say what you please; but be assured that you will find few people so cynical as not to be vastly amused by those writers."

I tried to get up an argument on the romantic and classic schools of writing, and instituted comparisons between the passionate and reflective works of our day, giving the preference to the former. But all my erudition was thrown away, at least on Lord Nottingham, for he replied not to my tirade *à la* De Staël; but Lord Annandale seemed duly impressed with the extent and variety of my *savoir*, and has, I can perceive, formed a high notion of my powers. What *if* this *preux chevalier*, Lord Nottingham, were to become enamoured of Lady Annandale, and *if* she were to bestow on him her vacant heart—for vacant I know it

—and *if* I were to blow the incipient flame into a blaze! I see a whole romance, nay, two romances, comprised in these three little —ies. Should nothing more eligible, as the elderly ladies say, offer, I may effect a *dénoûment* to this pretty fiction, which may place the coronet of a countess on my brow, and a strawberry one on that of Augusta — no bad exchange for her, I think, and not a very bad arrangement for myself. In a few weeks I shall be in London, whence you shall be kept *au courant* of all I do, or intend to do. I hope *notre comtesse* will not, with her usual indiscretion, shew me up, by relating any of our little peccadilloes at Vienna and Paris; but she is a sad *bavarde*, and commits her friends nearly as much as she compromises herself, by her imprudence. *Addio*, *cara* Delphine! Wish success to your

CAROLINE.

LADY DELAWARD TO LADY ANNANDALE

I WILL not dwell on the pain your letter has given me, my dearest Augusta, neither will I enter further into the subject of the imprudence you have committed: retrospection being now useless, except as a warning for the future, dearly paid for by the experience of the little happiness to be derived from a perseverance in wilfulness. Lord Annandale is now your husband; and I cannot think so ill of him as to believe that he would have become so, had he known your repugnance at the last to form the tie. It *is* formed, and *is* indissoluble; and by this, your first and fatal error of judgment, you have placed yourself in a position to demand a never-ceasing prudence, and never-slumbering self-examination, to enable you to fulfil the duties you have imposed on yourself. To a wife who loves her husband those duties

become pleasures, because she knows that on their fulfilment depends his happiness, as well as her own; but to one who is so unfortunate as to marry without a sincere and devoted affection, they should be, if possible, more sacred, as their scrupulous discharge is the only atonement she can offer for withholding that love which is to sweeten the draught of life; and which every man has a right to expect from her who voluntarily bestows on him her hand. Many have been the marriages without love that have been peaceful and respectable, if not happy. You, my dear Augusta, having committed a serious fault, must redeem it by your virtue; and prove, that not to be wise, is not to be unworthy. Leave no effort untried to attach yourself to Lord Annandale: gratitude for his attachment to you ought to excite kind feelings; and, when to this is added the knowledge, that, had you not accepted his offered

hand, he might have found many lovely and amiable women who would gladly have become his wife, and given him their affections, you surely cannot act otherwise than as a kind, indulgent friend, who will make his home cheerful, and his name respected. You must seriously examine your opinions and sentiments with regard to him; for indifference or dislike are great magnifiers of the defects of those whom we view through their medium, and we are seldom just when we permit their intervention. If he is not *all* that you could desire, despair not of rendering him so; for much depends on the use you make of the influence you will naturally acquire over him. Lord Annandale has lived too much in the great world to have escaped the faults it engenders; its glare and artificial enjoyments may have, probably, blunted the fine edge of his feelings, and led him to descend to less wise,

and less elevated views and pursuits. Let it be your task to lead him back to a more healthy tone of mind, and to more rational occupations; and be it yours to reap a rich reward, in the consciousness of duties fulfilled, and of tranquillity, if not happiness, secured. Remember that he bears a portion of the chain that binds you together — a chain to which he willingly submitted, because he believed that you would make his bondage light, in preferring him to all other men; a natural conclusion, knowing, as he does, that it was solely owing to your request that your parents yielded him your hand. Virtue, generosity, pity, all call on you, my dearest friend, to respect his happiness, even though you may have sacrificed some portion of your own. You owe this fulfilment of your duty no less to your excellent father and mother than to Lord Annandale. Think what would be their despair, if, having yielded

their daughter so much sooner than parents in general are called on to relinquish their children, and to a husband chosen by *her*, and not by them, they discovered that she had imposed on their credulous affection, and left them, who so loved her, for one she did not love. Spare them this blow, my dearest Augusta; and let your next letter bring better tidings to your true friend,

M. DELAWARD.

THE MARQUESS OF NOTTINGHAM TO EDWARD MORDAUNT, ESQ.

Delaward Park.

I NEVER thought so seriously, nor with such complacency, of marriage, my dear Mordaunt, as since I have been beneath this peaceful and happy roof, which seems fitted to be the very temple where Hymen ought to be worshipped.

You know that Delaward was always my model of what a nobleman should be; but, I assure you, I now look on him as the model of husbands—a part, few, even of the best men, perform with that just mixture of firmness, tenderness, dignity, and equanimity, which is essentially requisite, and which he possesses in an eminent degree. I dislike those exhibitions of fondness that we so often witness during the first months of wedlock, in what are called love-matches,—designated to me, by a French friend, as *l'indécence légitime*,—almost as much as the ill-bred carelessness which too often succeeds them. The first is the most disagreeable of the two, because it indicates a want of modesty and delicacy in the woman who permits such exhibitions, and a want of respect for her in the husband who makes them.

A man should see in his wife, not an amor-

ous puppet, with whom he whiles away his idle hours, but the partner, the helpmate, God has given him as the solace of his weary ones; the woman who is to be the mother of his children, the mistress of his home, and with whom he is to walk, hand in hand, through the painful journey of life, to that eternity where they hope not to be divided. But when I see, every season, the marriages that are formed, and the motives that lead to them, I turn with repugnance from the contemplation. You remember that good-natured but weak man, Lord Allingham, who was induced to propose to a girl he had met at every ball for six seasons before,—without bestowing a thought on her, except to remark that her *tournure* was *gauche*, and her feet clumsy,—because some interested people about him assured him she admired him. He marries—discovers that he has made indeed a sad mistake; for he

finds that her temper is irascible; that her manner is even more *gauche* than her *tournure;* and her mind as blank as her countenance. Poor Allingham! but he is rightly punished for his vanity. One of our acquaintances marries a woman because half the men in town admire her; and another is piqued into marrying one who has admired half the men in town, because, with a laudable ambition, he wished to rival them in her good graces. A thought beyond the gratification of the present fancy seldom enters into their heads; and, that fancy satisfied, they are left at leisure to discover the defects, moral and physical, that now are as visible to their scrutiny as they were previously concealed. What follows? the poor woman, married through caprice, and neglected from the same motive, is mortified, if not wounded; and seeks consolation in a round of dissipation, where

she soon finds some idle lounger, who by his attentions soothes her wounded vanity, while inflicting an indelible stain on her reputation, if not on her virtue. How many such women might, in the hands of a sensible and honourable man, have become happy and estimable! instead of serving, as is but too frequently the case,

"To point a moral and adorn a tale,"

in the circles in which they move. To trace effects to causes, all because they had been selected by some silly man as an object of selfish gratification, and deserted from the same motive. There is a mutual respect visible in all the conduct of Delaward and his wife, and a sustained tenderness, which never for a moment degenerates into that familiarity so disgusting in the *ménages* of newly married people. And this noble, this dignified woman, is the friend of Lady Annandale: what might not that lovely creature have become under

the tuition of such a Mentor! Delaward told me yesterday, that Lady Delaward had received a very melancholy letter from her friend.

"Poor Lady Annandale!" said he; "she deserves a better fate: for, though a good-natured and well-bred man, Annandale is quite incapable of appreciating such a person as his wife, or of rendering her happy. She staid with us some time, and I saw much to admire in her. All her fine qualities, and she has several, are natural to her; and all her defects, and they are but few, are the effects of the excessive indulgence of Lord and Lady Vernon, acting on a lively imagination and a quick temper. She had not been here three days before I saw a visible improvement in her, for the example of Lady Delaward had the best effect: but she is so young, and so much influenced by Miss Montressor, who, *entre nous*, is a very improper and dangerous friend for her, that I fear a season in London,

with its contaminating follies, will undo all the good that has been instilled into her by Lady Delaward.

I questioned Delaward further about Miss Montressor, and find that her aunt, a worthy and amiable woman, has been from early youth an intimate friend of Lady Vernon. A sister, many years her junior, married imprudently, and accompanied her husband abroad; where, after twelve or fourteen years of continental dissipation, he was shot in a duel, and Mrs. Montressor and her daughter were left, with a scanty pittance, to subsist as best they could. The beauty and polished manners of the mother rendered her a welcome guest at all the houses of fashionable resort; and being a weak-minded woman, without any mental resources, she abandoned herself wholly to the pleasures of society, leaving her daughter to the care of a French *femme de chambre*, whose morals

were as objectionable as her manners. Mademoiselle Annette was quite as fond of society as her mistress; and the consequence was, that the poor child, left at home in her care, was initiated into all the mysteries of high life below stairs, and sipped her *café-au-lait* in the coterie of Mademoiselle Annette, consisting of half-a-dozen *femmes de chambre*, and as many couriers, or valets, who related the adventures of their respective masters and mistresses, past and present, with so much *naïveté* and graphic skill, as to make a deep impression on the mind of their unlucky little auditor.

The demoralising effect of such associates may be easily imagined; and, when some *grossièreté* in the language of her daughter shocked the refined ears of Mrs. Montressor, and led to her ascertaining where it had been acquired, she issued peremptory orders, that henceforth her daughter was not to leave

her saloon, nor Mademoiselle Annette to introduce any one into it, under pain of her displeasure.

This mandate was equally painful to the young lady and the *femme de chambre*, neither of whom liked solitude; but a mode was found of satisfying both, that was forthwith put in practice. Mademoiselle Annette was much addicted to the reading of French novels; and by no means fastidious as to their morality. She suffered one of the most indelicate of those productions to fall into the hands of Miss Montressor, who devoured it with avidity; and the artful *femme de chambre*, seeing the pleasure its perusal imparted, proposed supplying the young lady with a volume every evening, provided she might go and spend that portion of her time with her usual companions. The proposal was joyfully accepted; the demoralising studies were continued; and, before Caroline Montressor had completed her fifteenth

year, she had attained a knowledge of the vices and crimes of society, portrayed in all the seductive guises of sophistry and pas sion, that could gloss their immorality, or throw a veil over their indecency. She saw, in every man who entered the *salon* of her supine mother, a hero for one of the romances in which she was impatient to enact a part; and was culpable in imagination, long ere she became so in reality.

Her mother formed a friendship with a Duchesse de Meronville, who had a daughter of the same age as Caroline Montressor, and of similar disposition. The girls, like their mothers, became inseparable. The books that had achieved the corruption of Caroline's mind were lent to her friend, who, in return, intrusted her with all the secrets of the *pension* she had lately left: the captivating power of the *maître de danse*, who always pressed her feet, when placing them in the

fourth position, the *jolie tournure* of the music-master, who retained her fingers always half a minute in his, when placing them scientifically on the keys of her piano; and *les beaux yeux du maitre de dessin*, who always retouched her drawings, but not so often as he found means to touch her hand, in spite of the Argus eyes of *madame la gouvernante*.

Two young ladies, so impatient for adventures, were not long without encountering them. The Marquis de Villeroi, and his friend, le Chevalier de Carency, two fashionable young men, one a Parisian, the other a Swiss, making the tour of Italy, presented themselves at the hotel of the Duchesse de Meronville, whom they knew at Paris, and were, by her, introduced to Mrs. Montressor.

In a morning visit, before that lady had left her dressing-room, the gentlemen surprised the young ladies, who acted the parts of

heroines, according to the last novel they had perused, so skilfully, that the marquis and chevalier were interested, if not smitten. The *demoiselles*, observing the impression they produced, intrusted the gentlemen with the secret, that their cruel mothers kept them from all society, allowing them to converse with no one; and hinted that, if any desire was felt ever again to see the recluses, it must be early in the morning, when they were suffered, under the *surveillance* of a *femme de chambre*, to walk in the Cascina. The hint was not lost; a *douceur* to the *femme de chambre* secured her services; and the imprudent girls were permitted to walk in the most retired part of the grounds with their cavaliers; nay, to receive them at home in secret.

"The Marquis de Villeroi, captivated with the pretty face of Mademoiselle de Meronville, was still more enamoured of the large for-

tune he knew she would one day possess, and determined on securing her hand: while his friend, having ascertained that Miss Montressor's sole wealth consisted in her beauty, directed to her only the most dishonourable views; to which, ere long, she fell a victim.

"The young ladies were equally compromised; and both expected the same atonement would be offered. This hope was only fulfilled on the part of the Marquis de Villeroi; for the day that saw him privately lead Mademoiselle de Meronville to the altar, witnessed the impromptu departure of the Chevalier de Carency from Florence, leaving Caroline Montressor a prey to all feelings save remorse; for that sentiment, hers, unfortunately, was not a spirit to feel. The Duchesse de Meronville pardoned a step in her daughter that was now irrevocable; and the Marquis and Marquise de Villeroi concealed the guilt of Caroline

Montressor, and extended towards her a friendship the sole basis of which was pity. A letter, soon after received from the faithless lover, under cover to Villeroi, gave the finishing blow to every womanly and proper feeling in this unhappy girl; and from the hour of its receipt may be dated the commencement of her total demoralisation. He stated, that in loving her, and seeking the gratification of that love, he but obeyed the dictates of nature and philosophy; and he left her from a conviction that their meetings would be interrupted by the *esclandre* which the marriage of her friend would occasion, or their pleasure be destroyed by reproaches, because he could not, or would not, like his friend, finish their charming episode of love, by a comedy *larmoyante* of marriage—a finale, which his poverty forbade, and his principles opposed.

"'You are young and charming, *ma belle*,'

he wrote, 'and may command a rich marriage, which should be the end and aim of every portionless beauty. When you have accomplished this desideratum, I shall be one of the most humble of your slaves; but, until then, let me, as a friend, recommend you to be prudent in your conduct. The interests of women and men are wholly opposed: that of the one is to get married; and that of the other, to avoid it by every possible means, unless driven to the altar of Hymen by the goading scourge of grim poverty, that gaunt spectre, who has *compelled* more victims to the fatal step than love ever *enticed* to it. Be circumspect, then, *ma chère petite;* count on my discretion; and let us hope to meet in Paris at some future day, when you shall have imposed the galling chains of marriage on one of your rich and dull compatriots, and emancipated yourself from the thraldom of *demoiselleship*. Wealth gives

every thing except youth, beauty, and health—these you possess; and, if you play your part skilfully, the riches you may attain. Keep this object always in view; and learn to smile at the *fade* sentimentality and romance, that never fail to subjugate your sex to ours. Adieu, *ma chère* Caroline; *aimez toujours votre*

HENRI.'

"Caroline Montressor neither wept nor pined at this confirmation of the unworthiness of him for whom she had sacrificed her honour. The last French novel she had read, had displayed a heroine abandoned under similar circumstances, 'who rose (as the writer stated) superior to the blow aimed at her peace, and, ascending the pedestal appropriated to talent and wit, hurled around her the weapons of both; captivating, while wounding and mocking, the victims she made.'

"'Such will I be,' said Caroline to herself;

and, from this day, she devoted all her time, all her energies, to acquiring a proficiency in those accomplishments most likely to aid her views. She was permitted by her foolish mother to accompany the Villerois, to Vienna, while she established herself as a resident in the Hotel de Meronville at Paris, with her duchesse, who offered her a home during the absence of the young people. At Vienna, the beauty and talents of Miss Montressor attracted general attention; and more than one of her admirers would have become suitors for her hand, had they not been alarmed from a step so irrevocable by an imprudent intimacy which she formed with the Comtesse Hohenlinden, whose conduct furnished the common topic of scandalous animadversion in every circle.

"The young Duc de R., at that period the cynosure of neighbouring eyes at Vienna, soon became fascinated with the English beauty;

and the comtesse, whose sympathy for the flames of others was in proportion to the indulgence of her own, lost no opportunity of affording him interviews with her friend. But Caroline, who, in adoption of de Carency's counsel, never lost sight of the prospect of a rich marriage, conscious that a *liaison* with the royal Duc would lead to no such termination, maintained her prudence; and established for herself, in his eyes and those of the Comtesse, a reputation for virtue such as they, at least, had rarely encountered. The good Emperor lavished presents on the meritorious young woman who could resist his captivating grandson; and Caroline Montressor became the fashionable belle of the court circle. Her intimacy with the Comtesse of Hohenlinden opened to her a new page in the history of human life. She saw in her a woman of high rank and great fortune,

almost wholly regardless, not only of virtue, but of its appearance, living only for the gratification of her passions; and so volatile and capricious, that the *engouement* of yesterday gave place to the one of to-day: and this woman, braving public opinion and outraging delicacy, was *fêtée* by all. No one doubted her culpability, and some censured, but *all* received her. Such an example fixed Caroline Montressor for ever in her false and pernicious principles; and the *hommage* she saw offered to her guilty friend, finally overthrew in her mind all the barriers that separate the good from the vicious.

"The works of Rousseau, Voltaire, and Diderot, were eagerly perused by this young female philosopher; who found herself, at seventeen, a willing believer in their sophistries, and ready to do aught that could facilitate her course in the ambitious path she

had entered. She became the *confidente* of the Comtesse, who had now formed an attachment to the Marquis de Villeroi; and was, nearly at the same time, intrusted with a love affair of his young wife. Neither shocked nor disgusted at these disclosures, she encouraged both in their reprehensible conduct, because it rendered her necessary to them; and sank herself still lower, by this foul participation in their guilt.

"Returned to France, she continued to reside with the Villerois, over both of whom she had acquired an ascendency that gave rise to a thousand evil reports. These reports were so generally circulated and believed at Paris, that they precluded the chance of her forming a marriage at all suitable to her views; and when, several years afterwards, on the death of her mother, her aunt, who came to Paris to offer her protection to

her niece, saw the supremacy she exercised in the establishment of the Villerois, and heard the reports in question, she gave her the alternative of returning at once to England, or of being altogether abandoned by her sole relative.

"The wish of forming a good marriage in England, that Eldorado of rich husbands, induced her to accept her aunt's protection, much to the dissatisfaction of the Villerois, who found her presence and lively conversation an agreeable relief to the dulness of their occasional *tête-à-têtes*, while she was ever a useful assistant to their plans of mutual deception. She left them, promising to return, if she failed in accomplishing her views. Subsequently, finding her aunt's residence, where she had been a considerable time fixed, most uncongenial to her tastes, she contrived to render herself so agreeable to Lady Annan-

dale, that she has been a frequent guest at Lord Vernon's; and, I doubt not, has influenced his daughter in forming this marriage.

"All that I have told you, I had from Lord Warrenborough, who heard it from the Chevalier de Carency himself at Turin, a short time after, when that dissolute man told it as an amusing example of his triumphs over female virtue: and I have communicated it to you in the belief that, having met Miss Montressor, the romance in which she has played so discreditable a *rôle* may amuse you. Judge, then, how Lady Delaward and I tremble for her poor young friend being beneath the same roof, and exposed to the contaminating example of such a person. Already has my wife endeavoured to warn Lady Annandale of the unworthiness of Miss Montressor, although, until yesterday, I never disclosed its extent to her. She considers, and I agree with the

opinion, that it is her duty to lay the fact before her friend, and will write to her immediately on the subject."

Here ended Delaward's tale to me, and here must end my voluminous epistle to you. Is it not worthy of a French novel? Poor Lady Annandale! into *what* hands has she fallen!

Ever yours,

NOTTINGHAM.

THE COUNTESS OF ANNANDALE TO THE COUNTESS OF DELAWARD.

Grosvenor Square, April.

YOUR letter really alarmed me, my dear Mary; and I have asked myself, more than once, what mine could have contained to have called forth such anxiety, not about my feel-

ings (and they most required it), but my conduct, which, I trust, will ever be blameless. I do not, and feel I never can, love Lord Annandale; but does this fact indicate that I shall be an unkind or an unfaithful wife? I trust not. If you knew him, you would entertain no fears for *his* happiness, whatever you might for *mine*. As long as he sees me well looking, well dressed, and well received, he will be satisfied: a clouded brow, a paler cheek, or a stifled sigh, are not things to alarm him, or even to be remarked. He thinks there are only two species of women,—the romantic, who are the young, and who, knowing nothing of real life, indulge in the illusions of imagination, sigh for an ideal happiness, and shrink from the positive one within their reach; and the unromantic, who are not the very young, and, having lost all the illusions of life, are content with the

homely and unimaginative enjoyments it can bestow.

He concludes that I shall arrive at this last state in due time; and, *en attendant*, thinks that it is not unbecoming to see a very young woman pale and pensive. He does not know that, before youth has learned to discriminate, the heart sometimes becomes suddenly matured, and supplies the fatal knowledge which is usually the growth of experience. It seems to me as if I had jumped from childhood to maturity at one step; but that step has been over a precipice, in which my happiness has been ingulfed. It is not, it surely cannot be, a spirit of envy that actuates me; but ever since I have seen *your* home, and witnessed how *you* are loved, my very soul has pined and ached with a consciousness of the want of a similar blessing. Were I so loved, and by

one I could respect, I think I could be happy, even though I felt not that fond, that lively tenderness, which I have seen sparkle in your eyes, and tremble on your lips, when your husband has approached. It is a sad thing to look at happiness only through another's eyes. It seems to me as if the being loved, cherished, and respected, by a good and honourable man, would be sufficient for happiness: one who mingled you with all his thoughts of this world, and all his hopes of the next; who left you with regret, and returned with delight; to whom you could reveal every sentiment, every feeling, as to a second self; one whose experience was to be your guide, and whose firmness, your protection. You and Lord Delaward give me the idea of two rational beings, united to divide the cares and share the blessings of life; while Lord Annandale and I remind me of two persons forming a

party of pleasure, into which as much amusement as possible is to be crowded, and who have no other ties, or aim, or end.

The evening we came to town, he proposed taking me to the opera: I declined, because I was fatigued, and wished to pass the first evening of my *séjour* in a house of my own, quietly at home. I explained these feelings; he assented, and left the room — to see to the comfort of my establishment in my own apartment, as I concluded: but no such thing. After an hour's absence he returned, dressed for the evening, wondered that I had not ordered tea, and said he was going for an hour to the opera, and then to the club; saying which, he kissed my hand, and hurried off, leaving me no less surprised than mortified at being thus deserted. Does not this first *triste* evening in my new abode seem ominous? I will endeavour not to entertain the apprehension.

Over the chimney-piece in the library in which I was seated, I observed the portrait of a lady, so beautiful, yet with such a melancholy countenance, that it increased the sadness I already endured. I felt sure it must be that of his wife—of her who was my predecessor here. He had not once looked at it on entering. How heartless! This portrait reminded me that he was a father; and its sweet, mournful expression occasioned me to experience a deep interest with regard to her child.

"She, too," thought I, "has been here neglected, and, like me, abandoned to solitude. She, perhaps, loved him, and wept in agony the neglect that pains me so little: she was, therefore, more wretched." And again I looked at that beautiful face, the eyes of which seemed to return my glance with mild pensiveness. There are some hearts in which the germ of melancholy is implanted

even from their earliest youth, and maturity only strengthens it. On such persons, the inevitable ills of life fall with a weight that, if it crush them not wholly, leaves them eternally bruised in spirit. Such a spirit was hers on whose resemblance I gazed with an interest that no portrait ever before excited in me. Every thing in that pale, lovely face announces it. Yes; I will be kind to her child; that sweet, appealing look pleads not in vain.

I experience a strange feeling in this house, as though I were an intruder; whichever way I turn, I see around me all the indication that I have taken another's place. The house was fitted up to receive Lady Annandale as a bride; her cipher, intermingled with flowers and gold arabesques, ornaments all the furniture in the apartments appropriated to me, the gloss scarcely off them; and she—in her grave, and I—in her place. And yet the

separation caused by death appears to me less terrible than the moral divorce of two hearts that ought to love, but cannot sympathise. She on whose portrait I gaze is not more separated from him than I am. An inseparable barrier, that of indifference, divides us, but *he* heeds it not: the heart is a possession he seeks not to acquire. There is a picture of her in every room. He must have loved, or have fancied that he loved her: yet now *he* seems to think of her no more than if she had never existed, while *I* can think of nothing else. How can we forget those dear to us, and lost? Methinks that,

> From out the grave of every friend we loved
> Springs up a flower (as fabulists relate,
> Arose from the red stream of Ajax's wound);
> Memory 'tis named; and, watered by our tears,
> It lives and grows, until its fibres strike
> Into the heart, nor leave it until death.

No; I was mistaken when I said he must have loved her. There is an indelicacy and insensibility in this parade of all the memorials of his first wife, that prove he could never have loved *either* of us. If *I loved* him, I could not bear all these mementos of another; and, even as it is, when he stoops to kiss my brow, I find myself unconsciously looking at her picture, as if I expected it would betray some symptom of dissatisfaction. When he returned home, which was not until four o'clock in the morning, he hardly apologised, either for the length of his absence, or the unseasonableness of his return.

He was, as he always is, in high spirits; (how I dislike a person that is *always* in high spirits!) seemed elated by his encounter with his different friends, and talked of the parties he had arranged for me; an endless succession, it would appear, of dinners, balls, and

soirées. I asked, where was his child? and he said, —

"Oh, by the by, I quite forgot poor little St. Aubyn. He is at Richmond, for he has been ailing — cutting his teeth, or afflicted by some other of the endless maladies to which children are subject."

And this man is a father! I will go to Richmond to-morrow, and see this poor child, who shall not, while I live, want a mother. I already love, because I pity it; and shall derive from it more pleasure than from all the gaieties which its parent has promised to obtain for me.

Ever your affectionate

AUGUSTA.

THE COUNTESS OF DELAWARD TO THE COUNTESS OF ANNANDALE.

INDEED you are to blame, dear Augusta, in thus giving way to depression, and expecting from Lord Annandale a sensibility that few men ever retained after twenty-five; and none, even to that period, who have made society and its artificial enjoyments the principal object of life. There has been no deception on his part; he shewed himself, from the beginning, in his true colours: one of those who like, and are liked by, the world, as they style that small portion of it which is comprised in the fashionable circle of the metropolis. The *succès de société* is the utmost extent of his ambition; he has acquired it himself, at the expense of the more solid and sterling qualities, which a contact with the world is so calculated to injure,

if not destroy; and he now, doubtless, wishes to secure it for you. He captivated your youthful mind by his descriptions of that society in which you are now called to enact a part; and you are unreasonable in expecting that he will abandon the habits which he has indulged for years, ignorant, as he probably is, that you disapprove of them.

A romantic mind, to sympathise with yours, you must not expect to find in Lord Annandale; but a kind, good-tempered, and cheerful companion, you may calculate upon, and must be content with. This is more than falls to the lot of all; for remember that happiness consists, not in having much, but in being content with little. Greatly as I contemn artifice, there is sometimes a necessity of adopting it in married life. I refer to, perhaps, the only occasion where it is innocent, which is, that of not appearing conscious of a hus-

band's faults. As long as he believes they are not discovered, his vanity, if no better feeling influence him, will induce his studious concealment of them, which is the first step towards their amendment: but, when once he knows they are exposed, he becomes reckless and callous.

Heaven forbid, my dear Augusta, that I should have any doubts of your conduct being always what it ought to be; what I dread in you is a disregard of appearances — a neglect of the *shadow* of goodness, while you are satisfied with possessing the *substance*. This is what is most to be dreaded; for all very young women, too early thrown into the vortex of the artificial stream of fashion in which so many reputations, if not virtues, have been ingulfed. Invaluable as is the honour of a woman, be assured the possession cannot console her for the loss of its reputation, — a loss to which her own

heedless inexperience, or levity, continually conduces, and which leaves her, through the remainder of her life, a target for the arrows of the censorious.

I learn, with regret, that Miss Montressor is to take up her abode with you this season. Beware of following her counsel, or letting her introduce into your home circle any of the persons with whom she associated while on the Continent; of many of whom report speaks most injuriously. You know how I dread giving credence to, or repeating scandal, but I cannot reconcile it with my sense of duty towards you, to conceal the real character of this unworthy person, whom I sincerely wish you had never known, as she is the last woman I should wish to see installed beneath your roof.* Let no

* Here follows a statement similar to the one made by Lord Delaward to Lord Nottingham, which, to avoid repetition, we have suppressed.

human being know that your husband is not an object of your strongest attachment; for, *that* once known, you will become an object of speculation and distrust to those who, judging of all women by a few of the worst specimens of the sex, conclude, that she who loves not her husband, either loves, or is ready to love, some one else.

Avoid intimacies, either male or female, except with persons whose reputations are calculated to add lustre to yours, for much evil is often occasioned by a contrary conduct. All the faults attributed to a woman in society are supposed to be known, and shared, by the females of the *clique* in which she lives, and, if they have ever been suspected of indiscretion, she shares in the censure. The *habitués* of a house give the colour to the reputation of its mistress. The men are invariably supposed,

by the good-natured world, to be more than mere acquaintances; and the women, *confidentes*. It is by such imprudent habits of familiarity that many a woman has lost her reputation, while her virtue has remained unimpaired.

Your excellent parents are well, and as cheerful as our united attention can make them; but they pine for you, and intend soon joining you in London. Lord Nottingham leaves us to-morrow; he is a very agreeable companion, possesses a highly cultivated mind, and great warmth of heart. He is one of the few with whom I would consent to share my husband's friendship. His attention to your father and mother has been unremitting; and they have formed a strong attachment to him.

Write to me often, dearest Augusta; tell

all you think and feel, to one who, if she sometimes chides you like an elder sister, always feels the love of one.

M. DELAWARD.

THE COUNTESS OF ANNANDALE TO THE COUNTESS OF DELAWARD.

DEAREST MARY,—I kept my resolution; and, in defiance of Lord Annandale's representations of the unreasonableness of the measure, I proceeded to Richmond, the day after my arrival in London. My perseverance in this scheme at first discomposed him, for he had, as he asserted, made engagements for me; but at length he yielded, and, to my dismay, said something about his considering my impatience to see his child as a flattering proof of my affection for its father. I blushed, from con-

sciousness of how unmerited was this eulogium, for so he evidently meant it to be; and, as a reward for my supposed tenderness, he offered to accompany me to Richmond, as if it were a sacrifice on his part, having, as he declared, a thousand things to do.

On arriving at a little damp-looking cottage, overgrown with ivy, situated in a rural lane at Richmond, we found the nurse absent; and the poor child I came to see, consigned to an untidy slip-shod girl of fifteen, who was endeavouring to pacify it, by jingling a bunch of keys, and singing, or rather screaming a tune. The nurse, she said, had gone out with a friend, only five minutes before.

"No! she be gone out ever so long ago," exclaimed a dirty child, of about six years old, who was torturing an unfortunate kitten; "mammy went ever so long ago, with that cross man who eats half our dinner."

"Hold your tongue, Bessy," ejaculated the elder, "and don't speak till you 're spoken to;" an advice that appeared by no means to gratify her to whom it was addressed.

Never had I beheld any thing offering such a disgusting picture of uncleanliness and discomfort as this abode; and its inhabitants were in perfect keeping with it.

The poor dear little boy was attired in a low-priced cotton dress, positively dirty; with a soiled and tattered lace cap, the remnant of former elegance, on his head; the face, pale and rigid, indicating that incipient disease had already assailed him: and his cries, or rather moans, were most painful to hear.

Lord Annandale was shocked.

"This is very dreadful!" said he; "would you believe it, Augusta, I thought, until we came here, that this poor little fellow was in a most comfortable residence, which this was

described to me to be; and for which, my steward told me, a large rent was paid. And see how the poor little wretched boy is clad — positively like a beggar's child; notwithstanding this abominable nurse sends such bills for his wardrobe!"

I ordered some water to be made warm, and inquired for clean clothes, to dress the child.

"They be mostly all at the wash," replied the elder girl, opening a drawer, from which she drew forth two nearly worn-out frocks and caps.

"No, they be'nt at the wash," said the incorrigible younger girl; "mammy took 'em all with her to Lon'on to sell; the cross man made her."

"It's no such a thing!" exclaimed the elder, looking much embarrassed; "they're all at the wash."

I took the poor and much neglected child, and, having performed the necessary and long-disused ablutions, dressed it as well as I could, this being my first attempt at any operation of the kind. Then, having sent one of the footmen for some Naples biscuits and milk, I succeeded in making a little panada, which the poor little fellow eagerly devoured. Wrapt in my shawl, and sleeping nearly all the time on my bosom, I brought the dear infant to London; and, when he opened his eyes, I was repaid, amply repaid, by a smile, and the quiescence with which I was permitted to kiss its pale mouth.

Lord Annandale although shocked at the scene we had witnessed, appeared to forget his own share in the culpable neglect of his child, in the anger he betrayed against its wicked nurse. He fancied, that, in allowing an unlimited sum for the support of his offspring, he

was doing all that was required; never recollecting, that his profuseness encouraged the cupidity of the designing impostor to whom he confided it; and who, charging for luxuries the child never had, denied it the common comforts necessary for its preservation.

"You are very good to that poor little animal," said Lord Annandale, (how the word grated on my ears!) "but pray don't kiss it until it is purified from the disgusting atmosphere it has so lately left."

"I feel no disgust towards the dear infant," answered I, coldly.

"Ay, that may be, but I do; and I don't wish to fancy your red lips and fair cheeks associated in any way with the impurities from which we snatched him."

I cannot tell you, Mary, how the gross selfishness of this speech shocked me.

I have had the nursery rendered as comfort-

able as possible; have secured a steady, respectable woman as nurse, and bought a wardrobe for my little *protégé*. Already he begins to look quite a different being; and the doctor I have consulted for him says, the delicacy of his health arose only from neglect. How dreadful a subject for reflection! and yet, his father seems unconscious of his most culpable share in what might, and, as the doctor says, would have occasioned his child's death.

The dear little fellow knows me perfectly, evinces his joy when he sees me, by cooing, and holding out his tiny hands; and nestles his head in my bosom when they want to remove him from me. *I* can now look with less sadness on his dead mother's portrait; and I could almost fancy *it* also looked less sad. It is soothing to have something to love, some creature that depends on one for its happiness. This helpless innocent almost reconciles me to

a destiny that will henceforth serve to render his less forlorn, and even a reflected happiness is not to be undervalued. I have been spoiled at home—home! dear and sacred name; how many fond associations does it recall! Not only did I form the source whence all the felicity of my dear father and mother flowed, but they, every hour, every moment, made me sensible of this gratifying fact. Here I am lost, confounded with the crowd, hardly sensible of my own identity, now that it seems so little essential to the enjoyment of those around me. Lord Annandale's habits and pursuits have all been so long formed, and without reference to me, that I seem in no degree necessary to the routine of his pleasures. Political and social avocations fill up so much of his time, as to leave little of it for domestic enjoyments, had he a taste for such, which I know is not the case. The feverish existence, so generally pur-

sued here, is destructive to happiness. Married people are rendered so wholly independent of each other for society and companionship, that it is not to be wondered at, if they often forget the ties which bind, without attaching them. A man of fashion, I really believe, marries merely because a well-born and well-bred woman is considered a necessary appendage to his establishment, to do the honours of his house, and assist him in adding to its splendour. But a belief that his happiness depends on her, no more enters into his head, than if she stood in no near and dear relation to him. She is not the confident of his secret thoughts, the soother of his troubles, or the sweetener of his hearth. No! she is an eligible person to share his dignities, and help to sustain them. She wears his family jewels, sits at the head of his table, gives him an heir to his honours, is polite and courteous to him and his friends,—and he is

satisfied. Whether *she* is, or is not, he never pauses to inquire. Nay, more, he would treat any indication of discontent as proof of a very unreasonable *exigeance*. What does she, what can she, require? Has she not a brilliant position? This is the first essential in the catalogue of necessaries for happiness, in the estimation of the world in general, and of the male part of it in particular. Yet who, with a sensitive heart or elevated mind, ever attained felicity in it, unaided by the domestic affections? As well might it be supposed, that, because a woman is sparkling in diamonds of an inestimable price, she is happy. The brilliant position, like the glitter of the diamonds, is only seen by others; the owner beholds not the lustre, though she is conscious of the weight. Has she not wealth to furnish every object that taste or fancy can desire, or luxury suggest? True; but did wealth ever

yet yield happiness, unless he with whom it is shared gave zest to its enjoyment? As well offer gold instead of bread to a starving wretch in a wilderness, as imagine that riches can satisfy a heart pining for affection and sympathy. If I know myself, I think that, had I found my husband's happiness depended at all on me, I should have silenced the murmurs of my own heart to administer peace to his; but as it is — yet will I not despair, yes, I will cling to this new, this helpless object, that has none else but me to protect or cherish him, and endeavour to forget, in his welfare, the selfish regrets of a disappointed spirit. How happy are you, dearest Mary, in having found a partner for life whose purest source of enjoyment you constitute, and to whom your perpetual presence and soothing attentions are too necessary not to render even a temporary deprivation of them felt as a misfortune difficult

to be borne, and their restoration impatiently desired!

Alas! I fear I must pray not to become your envious, instead of being, as now, your affectionate friend,

AUGUSTA ANNANDALE.

MISS MONTRESSOR TO THE MARQUISE DE VILLEROI.

ME voici, chère amie, in London, that imagined *El dorado* of spinsters; where rich bachelors float on the surface of society, as fish do in rivers, to be caught by those who know how to lure them. But, though they frequently rise to the bait, and nibble sometimes, yet are they rarely hooked. Whether their escape proceeds from their wariness, or the unskil-

fulness of the angler, I have not yet had time to ascertain; but I mean to make the experiment, and you shall hear the result. I more than once feared, that, after all, I should not come here: *madame ma tante* had so many scruples to be vanquished, and was so little disposed to yield any of them to my reasoning powers, of which, *entre nous*, she appears to entertain no very exalted opinion. I console myself for her humiliating depreciation of me, by the recollection, that in proportion to the obtuseness of the mind acted upon, is the want of perception of the ability, of the agency, brought to bear against it. It is thus that our vanity offers a salve to the wounds inflicted on it. My aunt thought, forsooth, that Lady Annandale was too young to be a prudent chaperon for me. I ventured to suggest that I was old enough to be a prudent chaperon for her. This retort only produced a portentous shake

of the head, and a, — "I fear, Caroline, you have adopted habits and sentiments on the Continent totally at variance with our English notions of propriety; notions that render you a very unfit friend for one who ought to be wholly, purely English."

"But, *ma chère tante* ——"

"Call me aunt, in good plain English, Caroline; for your French aunts seem to me to be very like comedy aunts, only brought on the stage to be duped or ridiculed, or both."

"Well, my dear aunt, in sober, sad English, why should you suppose that the feelings and notions on the Continent are at variance with those of England?"

"Because I have seen and heard of conduct in foreigners that I consider most objectionable; yet which, amongst them, excited no censure."

"That is to say, aunt, you heard no ill-

natured animadversions on it. The tale was not whispered in every society, with all the exaggerations that malice can lend, until nearly the whole story was changed, as would have been the case in England."

"Caroline, your depreciation of your own country is neither honourable to your judgment nor to your patriotism."

"And have you seen or heard of no conduct in English people that you considered most reprehensible?"

"Examples of such may exist, I grant; but they never fail to excite universal censure."

"Granted, my dear aunt; for the English are a very censorious nation. They love scandal as people do snuff: it excites them: but, when they have winked away, and whispered, and read away, in the scandal-vending papers, the reputations of half, if not all their friends, do they break off from them, and leave them

alone, not in their glory, but in their notoriety? No such thing. They discover that poor Lady C—— had a very foolish husband, who never looked sufficiently strictly after her; and, therefore, she was more to be pitied than blamed for that *disagreeable affair:* this same said Lady C—— having a generous, confiding husband, who, believing in her protestations of affection for him, never dreamed of her liking another, until her guilt was made universally known. He is generally censured: 'he ought to have suspected,'—'he must have known,'—'he was greatly to blame,' say all the world. And for what? that he loved, and trusted his wife. Then Lady D——, how deplorable her fate! With such a jealous, suspicious husband, was it to be wondered at that the poor, dear soul fell into that sad scrape? Lord D—— was wholly in fault. If men will be so jealous, suspicious, and severe, they must put up with the

consequences. Lord D—— is universally censured because he *did* look after his wife, yet could not save her: and this is the justice of society. Lady E——, whose bad conduct admits of no doubt, is found to be a most injured woman, because her husband is suspected of having liked Lady F——; as if an error in the husband's conduct could excuse that of the wife! The English can no more dispense with the scandalous papers on the Sabbath, than they can with going to church. One is, perhaps, considered a fit preparation for the other; for, as we are commanded to pray for all sinners, it is as well to know them, and their whereabout, *en detail*."

"Caroline, Caroline, this is a very improper mode of talking."

"A very improper mode of acting, I think you ought to say, my dear aunt. Now, on the Continent, there are no scandalous papers:

no trials in the courts of law, to offer a *bonus* to the malice of discharged domestics, or to enable husbands to put into their purses the valuation affixed to the honour of their wives. Scandal is not there considered a necessary stimulant to the daily food, and almost as indispensable; the consequence of which is, that, if there exists as much immorality on the Continent, the proofs of it, with all the disgusting details, are not obtruded, to shock the old, and corrupt the young. And this, surely, is an advantage gained."

"I deny it, Caroline. As well might you assert, that, if a contagious disease is making its ravages unseen and unsuspected, it is less dangerous to a community, than when it is made known, and people are warned to avoid it."

"Then you, aunt, approve the trials to which I refer?"

"I must always, on general principles, approve a salutary severity, while I deplore its necessity. If an incurable gangrene attack a limb, I should advise its amputation: on the same system I should counsel a similar treatment of those members of the moral body, that I sanctioned in the physical one."

"Then you approve the odious exposures of conjugal infidelity?"

"The trials that too frequently occur in England, and on which you, Caroline, have commented with a degree of freedom and flippancy habitual only to women who have lived long out of this country, have one great moral effect which those who take a superficial view of the subject may overlook. I refer to the publicity and revolting details that accompany them; which are so appalling, that it is easy to believe, that the terror they inspire may have served to deter many a woman from conduct

that might lead to such a result. A sense of shame is so inherent in the female heart, in which Providence, for its own wise purposes, has implanted it, that it often operates in enabling women successfully to combat and overcome a passion that might have triumphed over virtue. You may remember it is recorded that when suicides became so frequent among our sex, that numbers were every day committed, the only effectual mode found for arresting them, was by the enactment of a law, decreeing, that the persons of all women guilty of this fearful crime were to be publicly exposed. The sense of modesty and shame, stronger than the fear of death in woman's heart, stopped the mania. Are not the trials you alluded to, Caroline, a more shocking exposure? and may we not believe them to be an equally salutary preventive of crime?"

"But do you not think, aunt, that a hus-

band ought to shew some lenity to his wife, though she may have erred?"

"Why, surely, you could not expect a man of honour to sit tamely down with a wife who had violated hers? By so doing, he would become the tacit sanctioner of her guilt, and permit her pernicious example to sully the morals of his children."

"Will the exposure of her crime, with all its loathsome details, serve to preserve their morals, aunt?"

"Guilt *punished* is always less dangerous, as an example, than guilt tolerated."

"Casuists might pronounce otherwise, aunt."

"I am no casuist, and wish you were less of one. But I repeat, that you have imbibed most erroneous opinions—all that you have now been stating is so wholly in contradic-

tion to English feelings and notions, that I must again assert, that I consider you a very ineligible companion for so young and inexperienced a person as Lady Annandale."

I give you this stupid dialogue between my aunt and me, that you may enter into some of the peculiar characteristics of the English; one of which is, to believe themselves the most moral people in the world, while society teems with scandalous anecdotes, which, if only a quarter of them are true, would prove some portion of the upper classes to be the *least* moral in the world. Mr. So-and-So is openly talked of as the lover of Lady So-and-So, and invited wherever she visits. Many mothers would not hesitate to let her chaperon their daughters, and, if spoken to on the subject, would answer,—"Oh, yes, it is perfectly true; people do say very shocking things

about poor Lady So-and-So; but everybody receives her, and she gives *such* pleasant parties, and is such a *nice* person."

My dear compatriots are content to display their pretensions to morality, by censuring all who depart from its rules, rather than by an adherence to those rules themselves. And, having censured, they, like good mothers, receive back to their bosoms the children they have whipped, but not amended. Enough, however, of the English, *en masse*, for the present.

Now, for my friend Lady Annandale, who is the strangest person imaginable. Only fancy, she has taken it into her eccentric little head to conceive quite a passion for a pale sickly child of her husband's, eighteen months old; and as disagreeable as all children are at that age. *Le mari, pauvre homme*, seems quite flattered, though not a little *embété*, by this caprice of his wife's; which, with the usual vanity

peculiar to his sex, he attributes to her affection for him. She spends whole hours playing with and caressing this unhealthy little thing, and never seems so happy as when in its company. The evening I arrived, I found a chosen few of the *élite* of Annandale's friends were to dine here; but, judge of my agreeable surprise, when I saw the *comtesse*, *notre comtesse,* of Hohenlinden, enter. I had not written to apprise her of my intention of coming, so that she was as much surprised at the *rencontre* as I was. It was the first time of her seeing Lady Annandale; and she positively stood immovable for a minute, so much was she struck by her extraordinary loveliness. If I can judge by the human countenance of what is passing within, I should say she was more astonished than delighted at the blaze of beauty that broke upon her; though she quickly recovered her *presence d'esprit*, and,

embracing Lady Annandale *à la Française*, said she hoped that, as an old friend of Lord Annandale, and a still older friend of *la chérie* Caroline *Mon Tresor*, as she always calls me, *la belle* Lady Annandale would not consider her a stranger. The glance—half menace, half reproach—which *sa seigneurie* bestowed on Annandale, when she thought herself unobserved, unfolded their whole position, past and present, to me, as fully as if it had all been written in legible characters: and it was comical to see him, in order to conciliate *la comtesse*, looking as compunctious as possible for having wedded a lovely woman.

It strikes me that Lady Annandale is more beautiful than ever, and I can already perceive that she creates a wonderful sensation here. I can also perceive that *madame la comtesse* has been the love of Annandale, who has per-

suaded her, I'll be sworn, that his marriage was one of *convenance;* and she, who has vanity enough to believe all that administers to its gratification, has taken his statement *au pied de la lettre.* I fancy her saying to her friends, "*ce pauvre cher Annandale: il m'adore toujours, mais il est forcé de se marier, pauvre homme! Comme cela doit le chagriner! elle n'est pas du tout jolie. Il m'a avoué, enfin, qu'elle est bien laide, mais très riche.*" Don't you fancy her repeating this to all her coterie — and then, the brilliant beauty of Lady Annandale breaking on her without any preparation! I would not be *milord* at the next interview for something; as *notre frau grafinn* is apt to be energetic in her demonstrations of dissatisfaction, when deceived by any of her adorers.

She has not grown younger since we saw her last; *au contraire,* she looks haggard, and

fanée: but, all that she loses in natural charms she endeavours to supply by artificial substitutes, and resembles a piece of mosaic well put together. I, rather spitefully, talked of some of her admirers at Vienna; and in that tone of badinage in which you have sometimes flattered me I excel. She looked abashed; for she has, I conclude, been persuading Annandale that he alone has ever stood high in her good graces. I can perceive that it is the fashion attached to her position, and not her charms, which has won his homage; but this is not a rare occurrence here, Englishmen being more vain of the preference of a *dame à la mode*, however plain, than of that of the most perfect beauty who is not *en vogue*. What a contrast is there between the young and blooming Augusta, with her sylph-like figure, graceful movements, and

sparkling countenance, and this mature Teutonic Calypso!

La comtesse affects a *grande tendresse* for me; so I conclude that she wishes to make use of me in some way or other: we shall see, by and by. The *laissez-aller* of her manners seemed to astonish more than please Lady Annandale, who drew up with an air of offended dignity, very like that usually resorted to, on similar occasions, by her prudish friend, Lady Delaward. *Notre frau grafinn* was, however, quite insensible to this assumption of matronly decorum; — she regards as little as ever the opinions which others may entertain respecting her. I think, that to this open and contemptuous indifference as to whether she conciliates their esteem, or respects their prejudices, she owes her popularity with my compatriots; who are, in gene-

ral, prone to yield their suffrages to those candidates who appear the least eager to obtain them. Of that unreformed borough, "good society," the most effective members are often those who are most independent of the electors. *La comtesse* is, consequently, at the head of the most fashionable, if not reputable, circle. Pleasure is the order of the day, which they enter into, here, with a business-like sort of perseverance in the pursuit, that proves they have indefatigable energies, if not wisdom. Amusement (as our social efforts to repel the enemy *ennui* are conventionally denominated), which on the Continent is partaken of gaily and airily, is here a very serious affair; and laboriously occupies the attention of those who, in place of abandoning themselves to it with the cheerfulness of foreigners, pursue it, much as sportsmen do a fox, with no little risk, and still less enjoyment.

But, on all these subjects, I shall soon be able to make you *au fait*, as I intend to study them, *con amore*, and give you the benefit of my observation. Adieu, *chère amie; dites mille choses pour moi au marquis.*

Votre CAROLINE.

THE MARQUESS OF NOTTINGHAM TO EDWARD MORDAUNT, ESQ.

I LEFT the Delawards with regret, and arrived here, three days ago. I found all London, by which I mean the clubs and society, raving of the beauty of Lady Annandale, *qui fait fureur*. I attended the drawing-room yesterday, and saw her presented. Every eye was upon her, and every tongue loud in her praise; that is, every male tongue; for the ladies wondered what induced people to make such a fuss about her—*they* saw nothing

so very wonderful in her. Miss Montressor was also presented; and, had she not been near Lady Annandale, would have been admired, for she looked extremely well. To the generality of persons she must appear a very handsome woman. Her figure is graceful and symmetrical, and her features peculiarly regular and *distingué*: but the expression of her countenance is to me extremely disagreeable: for it has that hardness which belongs exclusively to persons whose thoughts have never risen above the passions and feelings of the worldly minded and calculating; a character quite the reverse of what I like to see in a female face. Miss Montressor seems perfectly aware of the value of all the advantages she possesses in her present position, and determined to avail herself to the utmost of them. She affects to treat Lady Annandale as a spoiled child over whom she has unbounded influence, and

Annandale, as a chosen friend. From the good understanding that seems to subsist between Lady Annandale and her, I conclude that she has contrived to exculpate herself from the charge made against her honour. To effect this was easy, with so unexperienced a person as Lady Annandale, who would be likely to redouble her kindness towards her, if led to believe her unjustly accused. Her intimacy with the Comtesse Hohenlinden offers an excuse for drawing that lady perpetually to Lady Annandale's, whom she votes her *amie de cœur*, a title to which Annandale is much better entitled.

Last night there was a brilliant reception at Delafield House; and again, Lady Annandale shone the brightest star of the evening. I had no idea of the beauty of this lovely creature until I saw her on this occasion; for, in the country, during the three days I passed be-

neath the same roof with her, she was so *triste* and abstracted, her eyes so dimmed by tears, and her cheeks so pale, that, though I was conscious that she was beautiful in spite of all these counteracting circumstances, still I was not prepared for the blaze of loveliness which she presented on the evening to which I am now referring.

She displays a degree of kindness, indeed I might say cordiality, towards me, that is very agreeable, and would be extremely flattering if I could attribute even a portion of it to any implied sense of my own merit; but I know I owe it to the favourable opinion the Delawards are so kind as to entertain of me, and the good-natured commendations of Lord and Lady Vernon, who overrate the attention I paid them in the country. Annandale has solicited me to conduct his wife through the routs and *soirées* when we meet,

while he divides his attentions between the Comtesse Hohenlinden, and Miss Montressor. He is elated at the sensation Lady Annandale has created; and more than ever a slave to that artificial world, to which the possession of a treasure such as that he owns ought to render him utterly indifferent.

I was interrupted yesterday before I had time to finish this dull epistle; and now resume my pen to add a few lines. I dined yesterday at Annandale's, with only a few persons of *haut ton;* consisting of ladies whose reputation are more fashionable than respectable, and of men whose morality is of that stamp which renders them the last persons a sensible person would select as his guests at a table where so young and lovely a woman presided. The Comtesse Hohenlinden came in the evening, followed by some of her adorers, whose attentions to her were marked rather

by warmth than respect. Her demoralising example seems to have withdrawn all reserve from the ladies who form her coterie, for each was occupied exclusively by the favourite beau of the season. In short, "lovers were all they ought to be, and husbands not the least alarmed." Lady Annandale was the only woman in the room ignorant of the exact relative positions of all the parties: but Miss Montressor penetrated the whole at a glance. as I could perceive by the significant looks she exchanged with the comtesse.

Already has Lady Annandale become the object of marked attention of more than one of the young *roués* of fashion who hover round her, mingling compliments on her beauty with *piquant* anecdotes of most of the ladies present.

"Observe," said Lord Henry Mercer, "how angry Lady Harlestone looks: she is jealous

of the Comtesse Hohenlinden, with whom she has discovered Charles Fitzhardinge has been flirting during her absence at Paris."

"And what right has she to be jealous of that?" asked Lady Annandale, looking as guileless and as innocent as—she is.

This question produced a smile from Lord Henry, who answered it by saying, "Your ladyship is the only person in London, or, at least, in our circle, that could require to be informed *why;* for every one knows that Charles Fitzhardinge has been the adorer of Lady Harlestone ever since she gave George Seymour his *congé*."

"Oh! I thought Lady Harlestone was a married woman," replied Lady Annandale, with *naïveté*.

This produced more than a smile, for the two coxcombs who heard it laughed downright.

"And what does your ladyship suppose she now is?" asked Lord Henry.

"A widow, of course," was the answer.

This gave rise to another laugh, and Lady Annandale appeared embarrassed. I changed the subject, and engaged her in a conversation relative to the Delawards, and her father and mother — two themes that never fail to interest her sufficiently to withdraw her attention from all others; and the two *beaux* walked away, voting, I dare be sworn, Lady Annandale a fool, or, at least, not far removed from that condition. I saw them go to the Comtesse Hohenlinden; and, from her laughter, and the looks cast at Lady Annandale, they were, I am sure, relating to her the simplicity, or, as they would most probably term it, the *bêtise, de la beauté.*

The comtesse, with that vanity and spirit of coquetry which characterise her, appears

now determined to exhibit Annandale as being more than ever the slave of her charms. She thinks that this is the only way of proving their power to the world; and she goes about hanging on his arm, and positively affecting to display the *tendresse* she *affiches* him to entertain for her. His vanity is quite equal to hers; and, to have the credit of making her dismiss one or two of the pretenders to her favour, he is capable of compromising himself, and behaving *ill* to Lady Annandale. Already he presumes to treat her with a *nonchalance* which, if it does not amount to ill-breeding, is, at least, far removed from that respectful attention which every man owes to his wife; and, short as has been their *séjour* in town, people already begin to comment on his being what they call "*so* fashionable" a husband.

An observation of Lady Annandale had

so much innocence in it, that I was glad no one heard it but myself, conscious as I am of the evil interpretations to which it would subject her.

"I scarcely know the persons around me," said she. "How happy they all seem, and how deeply occupied with each other! It is pleasant to see married people so much attached: though, I confess, I prefer witnessing that delicate and respectful attention which distinguishes Lord Delaward's manner towards his wife, to the familiarity, affectionate as it appears, of the gentlemen around us, to theirs. And yet it surprises me, too; for Lord Annandale told me, that in society it was not customary for men to sit by their wives, or to walk about with them, but the persons around us never quit each other."

If this innocent speech were promulgated, Lady Annandale would be ridiculed by every

man and woman of fashion, and set down as a perfect *imbécile: you* would judge differently, as does your friend,

NOTTINGHAM.

FROM LA MARQUISE DE VILLEROI TO MISS MONTRESSOR.

You ask me for news, *chère* Caroline, but you forget that news, like money, is not always forthcoming when demanded. Have you never observed how blank people look when either is required of them? Such is now my case, as yonder mirror, on which my eyes have just glanced, *par hasard*, assured me. *Voyons!* what shall I tell you? Conspiracies are so common, that they cease to interest any but the plotters, the plotted against, and the police; changes of ministry few care about, except *les agents de change; et quant aux modes*, Herbault tells

me, they arrive in London three days after they see the light here.

En vérité, I know nothing worthy of repetition, unless it be an occurrence which has recently excited the attention of all the *salons* in Paris. People talk of nothing else, and half-a-dozen versions, at least, are given of it. It is rather a long affair; but, as it has its points of interest, I think I will undertake its narration, and endeavour to serve it up to you in the regular "*Contes Moraux*" style.

You did not, I believe, know Monsieur and Madame de St. Armand. Yet you must have seen them, too, as they visited at some of the houses of our acquaintance, and the heroine of the *histoire* was too handsome not to be remarked. But, to my story. Once upon a time, then, the said Monsieur et Madame de St. Armand were considered a juvenile Baucis and Philemon, and were cited by all who

knew them as one of the happiest couples in Paris. Their affection, and the good understanding subsisting between them, were invariably quoted as examples in every *ménage;* (what a pity, *par parenthèse*, it is, that people are more prone to quote good examples, than to follow them! *n'est-ce pas?*)! and though Jules de St. Armand's uxoriousness, and deference to his wife's opinions, were sometimes ridiculed by the Benedicts of his circle, or the *garçons* who boasted their freedom from female influence, still it seemed generally allowed that he was as happy as even the most attached of his friends could desire him to be.

Jules and Alicia de St. Armand had been married two years at the period to which I am now referring. Their union had arisen solely in affection, and the time which had elapsed since its occurrence had only served to increase their mutual attachment. To great

personal beauty, both joined considerable talents; consequently, they were eminently calculated to shine in the *réunions* of the circle to which they belonged; but they found themselves so happy in the home which their love embellished, that they scarcely ever voluntarily entered into society.

Every husband who thought his wife too fond of balls and *soirées,* dwelt, with warm commendations, upon the domestic taste and habits of Madame de St. Armand; and every wife who felt dissatisfied with the dissipation of her *caro sposo*, quoted M. de St. Armand as a model for husbands. The natural consequences ensued. The wives with propensities to gaiety began to look with aversion on Alicia; and those husbands who liked all other places better than home quickly conceived an unfriendly sentiment towards Jules. This antipathy, however, might have been as

transitory as it was sudden, had it not been increased and established by the imprudent and enthusiastic praises of the friends and relatives of the exemplary couple.

And now, more than one married *belle,* who was to be seen continually at all public places, and rarely *chez elle,* was heard to observe, that it was quite ridiculous in Madame de St. Armand to set herself up to be wiser and happier than her neighbours; and that such an attempt could only be made in the peevish vanity of seeking to oppose and displease all her friends and acquaintance. Several of the men, too, who found more attractions in other women than in their own wives, spoke with affected contempt of St. Armand's hypocritical assumption of the *rôle* of a pattern husband, and of his ostentatious abandonment of society to act *le bon mari* at home. To pretend to be *better* than one's

acquaintance, is always considered as a piece of impertinence that demands correction; but to pretend to be *happier*, is an offence never pardoned. *Mari et femme* were viewed as thus offending, and those who so considered them determined on avenging themselves.

Little did the St. Armands imagine that, while they were enjoying the pure happiness which congenial minds experience in a domestic life, their tranquil felicity and retired habits were exciting the hatred of those whom they had never injured. Had this fact been communicated to them, they would have disbelieved it; for both were unacquainted with the ill-nature of worldly minds, and the wanton and atrocious calumnies which the spirit of rancour engenders.

The rarity of Madame de St. Armand's appearance in society rendered her beauty still more impressive whenever she was seen;

and even women who were, perhaps, really lovelier, ceased to attract their wonted degree of admiration when she was present; solely because the beholders were habituated to *their* charms, while *hers* were invested with all the additional grace of novelty. This success only increased the acerbity of those who were already but too well inclined to be hostile to her, and they anxiously awaited an opportunity of injuring and humiliating her.

At this period a ball was given by an aunt of M. de St. Armand, at which she insisted that my conjugal and exemplary pair should attend. Aware of this circumstance, some of the most mischievous of their acquaintance hoped to profit by it, and to arrange a plot which would occasion them dissension and mortification.

A M. de Melfort had been an unsuccessful suitor for the hand of Alicia St. Armand, the

year previously to her union with Jules; and had felt so much grieved by her rejection of him, that he fled to Italy, whence he only returned a few days prior to the celebration of the memorable ball to which I have been alluding. His return had revived the recollection of his former attachment, and people wondered whether he could behold his former flame, now a wedded dame, without emotion; while others were equally anxious to learn how St. Armand would treat his wife's former admirer.

A few of the most malicious of the ladies who bore my unlucky heroine so much ill-will, were assembled in the *boudoir* of one of the *clique*, two days before the intended *fête*; when, the subject of M. de Melfort's return having been introduced, Madame de Chatannes proposed to *mystify*, as she designated her insidious project, "the affected prude;" and

another, equally spiteful, suggested the practice of a similar mystification with regard to M. de St. Armand.

Various were the plans furnished by each of the ladies, who displayed a most laudable invention and rivalry on the occasion. At length, it was agreed that Madame Fontanges, who was chosen on account of her not being an acquaintance of the St. Armands, should be the person to put the following plot into execution.

This lady was to narrowly watch my hero and heroine; and, in case of their being separated during the ball, she was to approach close to Alicia, and, after asking an accomplice to point out to her Madame de St. Armand, to state that she experienced for her the utmost interest and pity, in consequence of her discovery of the craft and falsity of M. de St. Armand; who, while basely pretend-

ing to only adore his unfortunate wife, was the devoted lover of an artful and most wicked person. This verbal poison was to be delivered loud enough for Alicia to hear it; and, if it should produce the anticipated effect upon her countenance, the skilful calumniator was then to pass near the husband, and observe how very embarrassed and agitated Madame de St. Armand appeared, in consequence of the presence of M. de Melfort, for whom she evidently retained all her old *tendresse*.

Can you not fancy the delight with which this malicious *clique* would concoct this amiable plan? I think I can see them revelling in all the ecstasy which the expectation of its success would occasion them; and experiencing an almost insupportable impatience to inflict a deadly wound upon the peace of two persons who had never injured them, even in thought.

Eight and forty hours elapsed, and the evening of the ball arrived. Alicia and Jules sat at their dessert; and, as the wind whistled, and the sleet beat against the windows, both wished that they were not compelled to abandon their cheerful and happy fireside to mingle in scenes which no longer possessed any attractions for them.

"I never felt so reluctant to leave home, dearest Jules," said Alicia, "as I do this evening."

"And I, also," he replied, "would infinitely prefer the society of our own household gods, and your comfortable *bergères*, to my aunt's splendid *salons*, and all her gay company. But, *hélas!* we must go; and you, dearest, must do honour to the ball by wearing your diamonds, the ornaments to which I am least partial, because they are more calculated to excite the admiration of others, than

that of a husband. Consequently, I am more than half jealous of them — as I am, indeed, of all your *grandes toilettes;* for, in my opinion, they attract a too general attention. I like you best, Alicia, in your simple home-dress with the pink ribands (which I know are worn to please me), and when no other eye than mine can rest on your loveliness."

"And I, as you are well aware," Alicia replied, "dress only to please you, and am regardless of all other approbation."

"Yet, I confess," resumed Jules, "that, when I see you the object of general admiration, I have not philosophy enough to resist feeling proud; though I should be less satisfied if you appeared elated by your triumph, for I should be disposed to jealousy if you were the least coquettishly inclined."

"No! nothing could make me believe that you *could* be jealous, dearest," said Alicia:

"but I am not so confident of myself; for I am sure that, if I saw you paying the same attention to any woman that some of the married men of our acquaintance do, I should be very miserable."

As she thus spoke, an expression of seriousness, almost amounting to pain, stole over her beautiful face.

"You will, then, never be miserable, dearest Alicia," replied Jules, kissing her cheek; "for I am as particular in my notions of what a husband's conduct ought to be, as I am scrupulous about a wife's. But," he added, as he looked at the *pendule*, "it is time to begin to dress. Would that the ball had ended, and that we were returned, to find, as we always do, that there is nothing like home."

You see, my dear Caroline, that I am attempting to fulfil the promise which I made in the commencement of my story; and am

serving up to you my *facts* in a most *fiction-like* shape. But I am not *sure* that I have *not* some talent for scribbling; and I am now, therefore, resolved to determine my surmise.

Never did Madame de St. Armand look more beautiful than on this evening; and, as I was present, I can give no dubious opinion on the subject. While she passed through the crowded suite of rooms, murmurs of approbation followed her. Her husband enjoyed the admiration she excited; and, as his aunt whispered into his ear that Alicia was the most brilliant ornament of her *salons*, he smiled a grateful assent.

The enemies of Madame de St. Armand were, of course, rendered doubly malicious by her pre-eminence; and even the unaffected modesty with which she seemed rather to shun than to court admiration, added to their hostility.

Alicia was in conversation with a lady

whom her aunt had presented to her, when she heard her own name mentioned, and Madame de Fontanges repeat the preconcerted falsehood; every syllable of which fell on her ears as the death-knell of her happiness. She turned pale as marble, and was seized with a violent fit of trembling; but the necessity of concealing her emotion from her companion, was still predominant in her mind. The effort, however, to repress it, exceeded her strength; and she was almost sinking on the floor, when St. Armand approached her, and, placing her on a seat, sternly interrogated her as to the cause of her indisposition.

Never before had a word or a look verging upon severity been addressed to her by her husband; and the alteration in his manner struck the silly girl as a sort of confirmation of the statement she had heard. Her sufferings and agitation, consequently, increased to

such a degree, that he was obliged to lead her from the ball-room, to the delight and triumph of her enemies, who had been gratified spectators of the whole scene.

When Madame de Fontanges had poured her venomed words into the ear of Madame de St. Armand, she had sought her husband; and, turning her back towards him, repeated, as if ignorant of his vicinity, the concocted story relative to M. de Melfort's presence producing such intense agitation in Madame de St. Armand. The credulous and suspicious Jules, wounded to the heart by this imputation, though still half discrediting it, hastily sought his wife; and found a seeming confirmation of the calumny in her pallid face and disturbed demeanour.

Her illness, which, on any other occasion, would have excited in him the liveliest interest and pity, and elicited the most tender demon-

strations of tenderness, now only produced an ungovernable rage; every symptom of which only served to corroborate, in the poisoned mind of the foolish little dupe, the truth of the statement she had heard. After a long and violent paroxysm of tears, which he witnessed with indignation, he demanded of her *whom* she had seen, and *whose* presence had had the power to create in her so violent an emotion. She replied that she had seen no one whose presence was capable of producing such an effect. This answer made him still more infuriated.

"Do you mean to affirm," he exclaimed, with much violence, "that you have not beheld M. de Melfort?"

"Certainly not," she rejoined, much astonished by the question.

Unhappily, however, Jules had observed the object of his wrathful interrogation leaving

the part of the *salon* in which he had found his wife; and so near to her, that it seemed impossible that she could not have seen him. Consequently, believing that she was now deliberately uttering a falsehood, the wrath of the jealous creature became unbounded. Partially, however, repressing its indulgence, he withdrew from the ball-room: and conducted her back to the home, the late happy home, that, only two hours before, they had left with unruffled minds and loving hearts.

They scarcely spoke during their drive, for both were a prey to the most painful emotions. Alicia wept with bitterness, as the *past* returned to her memory in mournful contrast with the altered *present;* and her tears and sobs only served to increase the anger of her excited husband. This violence prevented her from repeating to him the conversation she had overheard; for his changed manner and

unprecedented severity seemed to confirm the fearful calumny; and she shrank from the idea of exposing her wounded feelings to one who appeared only to regard her agony with vindictive malice.

Both retired to sleepless pillows, tortured by the fiend, jealousy, which now awoke in their hearts for the first time, inflicting pangs known only to those who have fondly loved and trusted—and been betrayed.

But, I really believe, I am attempting the sentimental! And my fingers ache, and my eyes are blinded, and my head is dizzy, and I have already disfigured enough paper to fill the ambassador's bag, even if it were a sack: I must, therefore, reserve for another letter the continuation of my tale. Adieu then, *chère* Caroline, and believe me,

Votre amie dévouée,

DELPHINE, MARQUISE DE VILLEROI.

FROM THE MARQUISE DE VILLEROI TO MISS MONTRESSOR.

Ma chère Caroline,—As I have not much time or space to spare, I will resume my *conte moral* without any prelude; venturing to believe that you are under the influence of my literary spell, and are dying to learn the *dénoûment* of the narrative which, I flatter myself, I have hitherto conducted and developed with so much ability.

On the following morning, Alicia left her couch pale and suffering; her eyes swollen with tears and want of sleep, and her languid limbs scarcely able to support her exhausted frame. She hoped to find her husband more kindly disposed towards her than the night before; and determined to communicate to him the cause of the emotion which seemed to have excited his anger.

She repaired to him in the library; but his looks revealed even an increase of sullenness, and the words of conciliation with which she had proposed to greet him, instantly died on her lips.

At this moment, a servant entered with letters for them both; when, for the first time since their marriage, each was anxious to watch the effect which the perusal would produce upon the other. Alicia, having looked at the superscription of hers, and recognised the hand of one of her female acquaintance, laid it upon the table unopened; and fixed her scrutinising gaze on the countenance of her husband, who seemed, however, totally regardless of her observation, so intense was the evidently painful interest which his letter had instantly excited in him. He changed colour, his eyes flashed with rage, and his livid lips trembled convulsively, as he refolded the

mysterious source of this strange and sudden paroxysm, and carefully deposited it in his pocket. Then, turning to his perplexed and agitated wife, he exclaimed, in a most angry and imperious tone,—

"*Why* have you not read your letter? Is it that you wish to reserve its contents for the privacy of your own chamber?"

"You, it appears," replied Alicia, maddened by jealousy, "could not restrain *your* impatience until an equally fitting opportunity: and the words of your correspondent, whoever *she* may be, seem to have affected you to a degree which I should once have deemed impossible."

Jules looked at her with indignation flashing from every feature; and, snatching up her letter, sneeringly demanded whether she had any objection to his perusal of it. Alicia

promptly replied in the negative, somewhat appeased by a request which she thought would justify her in addressing a similar one to him.

He tore open the seal; but had not read ten lines, before he franticly threw the treacherous paper upon the table, and rushed wildly from her presence; leaving her both astonished and terrified by his singular conduct. In the hope of resolving her doubts, tremblingly and anxiously she seized the pernicious sheet which had produced such fatal effects, and hurriedly read the following "mystification:"

"*Ma chère amie,*

"We were all *au désespoir* at your sudden indisposition last night; but your old adorer, M. de Melfort, was still more affected

than any of us; another instance of fidelity, which again proves the truth of the old song.

'Qu'on revient toujours
À ses premiers amours.'

"The poor man looked so disconsolate when you withdrew, that we were compelled in charity to do all we could to cheer him. I hope that you are better to-day; and that you will always believe in the attachment of

"Your devoted friend,

"MARIA L'ESTRANGE."

This note conveyed to Madame de St. Armand the first intimation of M. de Melfort's return to France; a circumstance, however, which was so perfectly indifferent to her, that she looked upon this announcement of it merely as a *mauvaise plaisanterie* of Madame de L'Estrange, a species of amusement in

which that lady delighted. It was, however, evident, that this foolish jest, as she supposed it to be, had offended Jules; and, gratified at the idea that he still loved her sufficiently to be jealous, she left the room to seek him, and avow all that had shocked and grieved her during the last few hours.

He was nowhere to be found; but, on the table in her boudoir, she observed a twisted billet containing a few hurried lines, stating that he should not dine at home, and would not return till very late. Poor Alicia burst into tears while she perused this frigid announcement of an absence which would endure for several hours. And *where* was he gone? Jealousy answered the question, and darted its fiery fangs to her heart, as the thought struck her, that, even in that very moment, perhaps he was with her rival, and lavishing upon her those endearing affections which had been

hitherto all her own, and were the sole base of her happiness.

She had half resolved to set forth in pursuit of him, when the recollection of her ignorance of both the person and abode of her rival arrested her. *Her* rival! what bitterness was in the thought of this hateful person! and the gentle, the hitherto reasonable Alicia, who, a few hours before, had never experienced an angry passion, now felt her very temples bursting, and her respiration impeded almost to suffocation, by jealous rage and disappointed affection.

At this moment, her *femme de charge* entered, as was her usual custom, to present the *ménu* for dinner, and receive her mistress' orders; when the agitated Madame St. Armand was obliged to quell her emotions, and assume an air of unconcern.

"I have prepared the soup, and the *pou-*

larde au jus, for monsieur, as madame commanded yesterday," said the housekeeper; "and I think it will please him."

These few words brought a train of reflections, now fraught with bitterness, to the mind of Alicia. It was only the previous morning, that, anxious to please her husband, she had ordered his favourite *plat* for the dinner of the following day. How happy did she feel in expressing this desire! and now, though but so few hours had elapsed, what a dreadful change had occurred in her position and sentiments, and what intensity of wretchedness had she not endured in that brief interval!

She could scarcely assume sufficient composure to tell the *femme de charge* that M. St. Armand would not dine at home; and that, as she herself was rather unwell, she should only require a little *bouillon*. The expression of surprise in the woman's face awakened her

mistress to a sense of her indiscretion in avowing her indisposition at the same moment that she announced her husband's absence; and she felt embarrassed as she remarked the curiosity which she appeared to have excited.

Who has not experienced the misery of being compelled to assume an air of unconcern in the presence of importunate visitors or servants, when some painful *contretems*, which we are necessitated to conceal, has occurred? In spite of, to adopt the expression of one of your poets, "*our* matchless intrepidity of face," even you and I, *ma chère* Caroline, have, ere now, endured this vexatious species of trial with something very like discomposure, if not confusion.

Fancy, then, how such a sentimental creature as my heroine must have suffered under those circumstances; she who had never hitherto been compelled to conceal her slight-

est emotion. Yet now, while undergoing the fiercest pangs of jealousy, which shook her frame and agonised her heart, she had the additional mortification of feeling that she and her husband would become the subject of the impertinent curiosity and remarks of their own menials; a bitter and humiliating thought, before which her pride and delicacy shrank in sensitive alarm.

Do not accuse *me* of sentimentality, if I observe that it is almost incredible how painfully minor ills can make themselves felt, even in the very moment when we are enduring great and overwhelming afflictions. The power of weeping in entire secrecy, all access debarred to prying curiosity, or coarse sympathy which but aggravates the sorrow it would sooth, is in itself a source of alleviation; but the necessity of wearing the semblance of tranquillity when the heart is breaking, to elude

the vigilant eye of plebeian inquisitiveness, is alone a heavy suffering.

Remember this remark is made in my *métier* of author; and you must not consider it as at all a representation of my own sentiments.

Every thing in the room when Alicia was seated reminded her of Jules. All that it contained were his gifts, and endeared to her by a thousand fond recollections. The book he had been reading to her the day before, while she sat at her embroidery, was still on the table, with a mark upon it, to indicate the place where he had terminated; and the bouquet he had brought to her, was still fresh in the vase where he had placed it. As her eye rested on each object indicative of his tenderness, she asked herself, whether it was possible that he could always have been deceiving her; and that, while he seemed to be only occupied in lavishing tokens

of affection on her, he was in reality wholly devoted to another? Her heart answered, No! Her feelings became softened by the recollection of all his delicate and incessant attentions; and she wept with much less bitterness than before, as hope whispered, that he who had hitherto so loved her, could not, in a few brief hours, be permanently and irremediably changed.

A letter was brought to her; and, for an instant, her bosom throbbed with joy, as she thought it might come from Jules, who, repenting of his severity, had written to acquaint her with his altered feelings. But, alas! the characters were not his; and, with indifference, she then unfolded the sheet.

Soon, however, its contents engrossed her liveliest attention. It was anonymous; and it stated that pity for her, and a desire of investing her with the power of reclaiming her

unfaithful husband, induced the writer to address her. The attachment of M. St. Armand for another had, the writer asserted, long been notorious to his friends, who were of opinion that his wife's ignorance on the subject stimulated him to continue his vicious course. But, were he once detected in his duplicity, repentance and shame might induce him to lead an altered life, and return to his domestic duties.

The anonymous writer added, that Mons. St. Armand was to meet the object of his affection that night, at the *bal masqué* at the Opera; and that the lady was to be dressed in a pink domino, and was to stand close to the orchestra, on the left side. At eleven o'clock, she was to hold up a bouquet, which was to be the signal, concerted between her and her lover, of her emancipation from all *espionage*, and that he was then immediately to join her.

The letter then stated, that if Madame St. Armand, disguised in a similar way, stationed herself near the appointed spot, and made the concerted signal, her husband would approach, mistaking her for the object of his passion; when she might suffer him to conduct her to a box, and there, disclosing herself, overwhelm him with shame and contrition.

Various and violent were the conflicting feelings that shook the frame of the jealous and credulous Alicia while reading this artful concoction of the malicious junta. Could she venture to repair to such a scene of levity, and place her husband in the humiliating position the writer recommended? No! she would herself rather endure any agony, than adopt so daring and unfeminine a course.

But then came the reflection, that, if she disobeyed the information she had received,

her rival — her hateful, hated rival — would meet *her* husband, would hang on *his* arm, and tranquilly and happily listen to those expressions of fascinating endearment to which she alone was entitled! This thought was omnipotent; and, maddened by jealous rage, she resolved to adopt the advice of her unknown correspondent.

Her determination became confirmed, as she recollected how many times she had heard her husband censure this licentious species of amusement, and speak in terms of indignant condemnation of those females who resorted to it.

"Yes," thought Alicia, with bitterness, "he may well reprobate the attendance of wives at such scenes. Their presence might be very embarrassing to husbands such as he, who, breaking through every tie of love and duty, convert the immorality they so basely

affect to loathe, into the means of sustaining their intercourse with the infamous objects of their guilty caprices. But *I*, too, will be there; and, at least, prevent him from meeting the vile woman who has corrupted him. Oh, God! that I should live to suffer this indignity!"

Her head throbbed, and her brain seemed on fire. She was incapable of reflection; for the mingled passions of love and jealousy assumed the entire dominion of her troubled mind, and silenced every incipient whisper of reason.

Do not fancy this description too highly coloured, Caroline; for "I, too, was an Arcadian,"—I once felt this, or something very like it. But it was two months, not two years, after my marriage.

She ordered her carriage, and drove to a shop that furnished masks and dominoes; and, having procured one of the latter which

was exactly similar to that described in the anonymous letter, she returned to her residence, trembling with impatience and anxiety to encounter her husband.

The letter which had produced so much impression on Jules in the morning, was also anonymous; and, under the plea of pity for his position, as an injured and deceived husband, informed him that Madame St. Armand had, the night before, promised her old lover, M. de Melfort, that she would meet him at the *bal masqué* at the Opera, provided she could elude the vigilance of her jealous husband. The writer, therefore, cautioned M. St. Armand, that, if he wished to preserve his honour, he must not leave his wife's presence the whole of that day and night; but, if he preferred to detect her in her guilt, he had only to plead an engagement abroad, and proceed to the Opera House, where he would

have ocular demonstration of her perfidy. The dress Madame St. Armand was to wear was accurately described; but *twelve* o'clock was the hour named for her meeting with her lover.

The first impulse of the angry husband was to charge his wife with her intended assignation; but then came the recollection, that she might as unblushingly deny this imputation, as she had, the night before, denied that of having seen M. de Melfort, though he himself had beheld him withdrawing from her presence. No! he could no longer place reliance on her veracity; and therefore it were fruitless to accuse her, and urge her to endeavour to establish her innocence, when her asseverations could be productive of no diminution of his suspicions.

He next resolved to watch her narrowly, during the whole day and evening, and thus

prevent her from leaving the house. But soon it occurred to him — and jealous wrath instigated the thought — that the better course would be to detect her in the moment of meeting with her lover; and spurn her at once from his home and heart, instead of continuing to endure an endless life of uncertainty, suspicion, and misery.

The last feeling became ultimately predominant; and, instigated by it, he left the house, and concealed himself in a *café* in the vicinity, whence he could watch his own house. No sooner, therefore, did his wife's carriage issue from the gates, than he jumped into a cabriolet, and followed in her path. He *hoped* that she was going to visit some of her relations; though her leaving home at all, after the agitation and illness of the previous night, their mutual coldness and petulance of the

morning, and their final separation in anger, seemed a confirmation of his worst fears.

He was not long in suspense; for her carriage shortly stopped at the door of a masquerade warehouse, where he saw her descend, her face concealed in her veil, and her person enveloped and disguised in a large mantle. So ungovernable was his rage at this apparent proof of her guilt, that he could scarcely resist his desire to enter the shop and overwhelm her with his reproaches. But, with a violent effort, he subdued the tempting impulse, and resolved ——

But, *ma chère* Caroline, I do not know whether I shall ever communicate to you what he *did* resolve. Here am I toiling like an author in an attic to please you; and I now recollect that you have never yet told me that you experience the slightest interest in my

labours. This assurance, however, I must have, ere you receive another line from

Your affectionate friend,

DELPHINE, MARQUISE DE VILLEROI.

P.S. To bribe you into applauding me, and into professing curiosity, even if you have not yet entertained it, I must warn you, that the best part of my tale is untold. You see I already experience an author's vanity in my vocation.

THE MARQUISE DE VILLEROI TO MISS MONTRESSOR.

MA CHERE CAROLINE, — Of course, I shall believe your protestations: I find in myself such an invincible craving for your approba-

tion, that never was a person more disposed to be duped. Resolving, therefore, to be convinced that your profession of the interest which my tale deserves, and has excited, &c., is all pre-eminently sincere, I will now proceed to detail to you the catastrophe.

My last letter terminated with my announcement of Jules' formation of a resolution, which, with truly literary tact, I piquantly forbore to declare. This resolution, was to master his present temptation to an imperfect retribution; but, by postponing it, to render it more thorough and complete.

In this determination, he entered the warehouse as soon as his wife had left it; and, having provided himself with a mask and domino, such as were described in the anonymous letter, he retired to a *restaurant* in the vicinity of the Opera House; there, to await, in

trembling impatience, the moment which was to convict his wife of indelible guilt, and blight eternally his own happiness.

Every softer feeling was banished from his breast; every recollection of past tenderness only added to his rage, by compelling him to contrast his present convictions of her falsity and guilt, with his former notions of her purity and innocence. How fondly, how madly had he idolised her! and how many instances of her devoted attachment, which, only a few hours before, had they recurred to him, would have been meditated on, and cherished with transport and pride, were now only regarded by him as proofs of her skilful artifice and consummate treachery.

The envious and rancorous women who planned the savage plot which I have been detailing, scarcely hoped that it could prove successful. They feared that the timidity of Madame

St. Armand's nature would preclude her, at least, from going to the *bal masqué*, though they expected that her husband might be tempted to adopt their mischievous advice. In order, therefore, that he, at all events, might be imposed upon, they dressed the *femme de chambre* of one of the *clique* in a pink domino, and instructed her to place herself near the orchestra at the appointed hour, and give the concerted signal.

They also wrote an anonymous letter to M. de Melfort, stating that a lady, who had an important communication to make to him, desired to meet him, at eleven o'olock, at the *bal masqué;* concluding by repeating the instructions already detailed in the letter to Madame St. Armand.

The hours that intervened between the purchase of the domino and the moment for assuming their disguise, seemed interminable

to the unhappy husband and wife. A hundred times was Alicia about to abandon her intention, as the dread and indecorum of exposing herself, alone, in so vast and profligate an assembly, arose to her imagination. But, then, the idea that her absence would leave her hated rival undisputed possession of her husband, again maddened her, and determined her to execute her plan, in defiance of all the feminine misgivings which still made her shrink from the anticipation of the scene which she felt must occur.

Soon her embarrassment was excited by the thought, that her servants must be acquainted with her visit to so disreputable a place — and alone, too; she, who never went any where without her husband.

"But what avail now," thought the wretched Alicia, "my fears of the condemnation of my own menials? What signifies to

me what the whole world may think, in comparison with the necessity of preventing Jules from meeting that wicked woman!"

The astonishment depicted on the countenances of her domestics, when, at half-past ten o'clock, she entered her carriage, disguised in a mask and domino, made the blush of shame mount to her very forehead, and almost induced her to abandon her resolution. But now that the servants *had* seen her in her disguise, and *had* formed their surmises and conclusions, any pusillanimous retrogradation would be even worse than fruitless. Away, therefore, with all irresolution; and she determined to proceed in her perilous enterprise.

On arriving at the Opera House, and discovering the throng around the entrance, she became so much alarmed, that she shrank back in the carriage; and again, for a moment, meditated a return to her home. But, growing

desperate at the thought, that in a few minutes she might be too late to prevent the meeting between her husband and the object of his guilty love, she hurriedly alighted ; and, giving the servant orders to await her return as near the spot as possible, tremblingly entered the theatre.

The lights, the music, the tumultuous rush of persons, and, above all, the noise, struck upon her terrified senses, and made her feel scarcely capable of preventing herself from sinking on the earth. Various masks accosted her with the usual hacknied addresses ; and, amused by her evident alarm, seemed peculiarly bent on persecuting her with their flippant attentions.

The strangeness of her position, alone in a crowd for the first time in her life, the motley throng of hideous masks, and the disguised and squeaking tones of those who wore them,

appalled her; and she shrank in painful alarm from each person who addressed her, though, in escaping from one tormentor, she only found herself assailed by another. But, in spite of her fears, one passion, painful and mighty in its influence, still supported and gave her resolution to proceed. This passion was jealousy, which steeled her nerves, and deadened all other feelings in her troubled breast.

She advanced towards the appointed spot; but, though eleven o'clock had struck, in sounds that vibrated like a death-knell in her ear, no person like the one described in her letter was visible. She repeatedly made the concerted signal with her bouquet, but in vain; she was only addressed by a crowd of masks, all utterly dissimilar in appearance to the one she sought with so much fearful interest. What if he had already joined her detested rival? there was agony and madness in the thought!

"Why are you alone, *beau masque?*"

"Where is your unpunctual cavalier?"

"Take my arm, and do not wait for him."

Such were the questions and phrases with which she was persecuted by the surrounding revellers; who, marking the impatience of her gestures as she turned from them, concluded that she was in search of one who had disappointed her.

She had passed nearly an hour in this state of agonising suspense, — afraid to leave the appointed spot, lest she should miss the object of her search; when, to her inexpressible relief, she saw a mask approaching, whose domino exactly resembled the one described in the letter, and whose air strongly reminded her of that of her husband.

She raised her bouquet, and the mask instantly advanced and offered her his arm. So great was her emotion, that she could

scarcely move ; when her companion, feeling her arm trembling within his, to a degree that indicated intense agitation, in a disguised tone expressed his sympathy, and proposed to conduct her to a box, where she might repose, until she should have regained her self-possession.

" How unlike the tenderness of his manner to me in past happy days!" thought Alicia. " No! he cannot love the person for whom he mistakes me, or he could not be so calmly indifferent."

A ray of hope shot through her soul at this thought ; and she entered the box, far less wretched than when her companion had first accosted her.

I must now return to M. St. Armand, who passed *his* period of probation in a state of the most violent excitement. At a quarter to twelve he hurried to the *bal masqué* ; and

proceeded direct to the spot designated in the letter. There he saw a female in a pink domino, whose stature nearly resembled that of his wife, who gave the signal he expected. He joined her instantly; and, offering his arm, addressed to her some of the usual phrases on such occasions; to which, however, she declined all reply, except by an affirmative movement of the head. He conducted her to a box, and requested her to unmask; but he could neither induce her to comply with this entreaty, nor to answer his questions. At length, maddened by what he deemed her crafty attempt to avoid detection, he tore the mask from her face, and beheld — an utter stranger.

He was rushing from her presence, frenzied by shame and disappointment, when the voice of his wife, in the adjoining box, struck on his ear. With one effort and bound, he burst into it, and discovered M. de Melfort, and Alicia in a paroxysm of tears.

"Vile woman!" exclaimed the furious husband; "at last, then, I have detected you in your infamy! And you, sir," he added, with increasing vehemence, turning to the astonished De Melfort--"you, her paramour, come with me instantly, that this foul disgrace may be effaced in your blood, or mine!"

Alicia fell, fainting, to the ground; and De Melfort, having attempted to raise her, received a violent blow from the maniacal husband.

A crowd collected round the box; and the presence and influence of so many strange faces, momentarily allayed the wrath of the desperate St. Armand. He instructed one of the *gens d'armes* to place madame in the carriage; and then, giving him the address of her mother, ordered her to be conveyed to her residence.

St. Armand would listen to no explanation

that De Melfort could offer: and, in a few hours, he was a corpse; having been killed by the first fire of his adversary, in the duel to which he had compelled him.

Of Alicia nothing remains to be told, except that she is an inmate of a *maison de santé*, with little probability of ever recovering her reason.

The plotters of the anonymous letters console themselves by asserting, that "they did not expect that their *plaisanterie* would terminate so tragically: nor would it, had not the St. Armands been romantic *imbécilles;* and, *therefore*, the whole fault rests with them."

With this ingenious logic I conclude. But, perhaps, you will protest that, as the impartial chronicler of events which have excited so much attention, I ought to arbitrate between the opposing parties, and adjudicate the degree of censure which they should incur. *En vérité*, then, I think the St. Armands *were* very silly,

sensitive people; but that their antagonists had rather a greater love of *tracasserie* than, *comme il faut*, people ought to possess.

The moral—as every tale should have one—is, that people should not pretend to be better or happier than their neighbours, lest they become victims to a *mystification de société*.

Addio, cara mia!

Ever thine,

DELPHINE, MARQUISE DE VILLEROI.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

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